The MILLION DOLLAR DOLL

A. M. WILLIAMSON

LIBRARY
Brigham Young University
RARE BOOK COLLECTION
PR
5834
.W595
M45
1924
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
3 1197 22963 4909

Mary Helena Hartman
123 The Finnie Ave.
Fort Wayne, Ind.

April 1st, 1928.

The Million Dollar Doll

A. M. WILLIAMSON

The Million Dollar Doll

BY

A. M. WILLIAMSON

CO-AUTHOR WITH C. N. WILLIAMSON OF

"The Night of the Wedding," "Vision House," "The Lightning Conductor," "The Golden Silence," etc.

NEW YORK

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

COPYRIGHT, 1924,
BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

THE MILLION DOLLAR DOLL
— B —
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

THE LIBRARY
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

The Million Dollar Doll

The Million Dollar Doll

I

NO one would believe in Terry Desmond and her story, without some knowledge of her childhood and her upbringing. Those years, and what she was not taught at the convent, would have explained her to Sheridan. But, if he had understood in the beginning or near it, the story would have been different.

. . . . . .

In the memory of most children there are milestones with blank stretches in between. Teresa Desmond's first landmark was in June, just before her seventh birthday.

There was an old rose garden at Silverwood. All the rose trees were old, and the paths of broken paving-stones were seamed with moss and weeds. To reach the garden across the lawn you had to wade through tall grass—for the place needed four or five gardeners, and had none; but the roses were Terry's friends. She played that they were fairies by night and flowers by day. Wonderful Sister Julia, who was like a princess (one of those princesses you saw in Sunday Supplements when Father had finished) had brought her books about fairies. Terry had learned to read those books without being taught.

On this day Terry was in the rose garden, wondering if Julia would come from New York for the birthday, when up the drive from the gate flashed a motor car.

Such a thing had never happened before in the five years (they seemed like All Time) since Terry came to live at Silverwood. Many cars passed along the road, and Terry's spirit flew after the beautiful ones, leaping on board to whirl away into Adventure. But a car inside the gates—a splendid blue car with glittering windows—what could it mean?

At first the child stood still, peering through a screen of roses. Then it occurred to her that she might run to the house. Would Father be angry?

He and Mother were caretakers at Silverwood, but in Terry's eyes they were the master and mistress. There was an old lady, Mrs. Parmalee, who stayed in some far-off country called Europe, and Father and Mother had been asked by her to live at Silverwood. But she never came—nobody came except Julia—so the place was Home. Father was like a lord, and often said to Mother and Julia that he *would* have been a lord, in Ireland, except for some queer reason which Terry couldn't understand. It had to do, apparently, with a marriage—or rather, a marriage that ought to have happened and hadn't. Still, if Terence Desmond were not a lord in Ireland, he was at Silverwood. You had to obey him, or things were disagreeable for every one.

Father had a summer cold to-day, and was keeping to the house. You had to be careful about making a noise or doing anything he might not like, for if you forgot, he burst out from a black, silent mood, into one of his red rages.

Mother, very mouselike and subdued, had sent Terry to the rose garden with a piece of bread and sugar,

and the whispered advice, "Best not come in till supper-time." But since then the beautiful car had happened. The child was drawn to the house as iron filings are drawn to a magnet.

"Well, by *gosh!* Who are *you,* I wonder?" was the strange greeting she got from a smart young man in grey with silver buttons, who sat on the front seat of the car.

Terry gazed at him in pained surprise, and he stared hard at her.

" 'Gosh' isn't a nice word," she informed him.

"Sorry!" remarked the youth, continuing to stare. "But I got a shock, seein' you. You're the livin', miniature image of *my* young lady. She doesn't look old enough to be . . . but you never know! Say, who *is* your Mother?"

"Her name's Mary Desmond," Terry replied. "This is our house."

"Some house!" the guardian of the blue car echoed. (Terry had never heard the word "chauffeur." For her, he was the owner.) "Sure your ma doesn't live in New York?"

"No. It's my sister who lives there," the child explained. "She comes to see us."

"I guess she's come now," said the man. "But her name's different from yours. That'll be because Miss Divine's on the stage, I expect."

Miss Divine! On the stage! Terry didn't know what being on the stage meant. She wished to ask, but something sensitive within her forbade questions to a stranger about Julia. Besides, the child's attention was caught in another trap. Julia had come,—in a motor car. It was magical. And the front door stood open. That was strange, too. No one ever used the front door.

Terry forgot that Father was in "one of his moods," and that she had been warned to keep at a distance. She darted up the steps of the porch and into the house. Then, before she could run across the hall to the passage leading down to the basement (the family lived in the basement) a voice stopped her.

"Damn you, mind your own business!" it roared. Father's voice! And he never spoke like that except to Mother—Mother, who was so small, so meek, yet seldom gave in really, even to him.

Everything was queer to-day! The voice came from the drawing-room: and now Terry remembered that the shutters were open. The door of the room was a little open, too. The child peeped in, and saw three figures in a scene of confusion.

There was Mother, her tiny figure almost overwhelmed by a mass of white calico covers taken from the brocaded furniture and piled onto her thin arms. There was Father, towering giant-like, red-haired, black-browed, handsome yet terrible. Both were standing, the small woman showing that odd mixture of cowardice and obstinacy which was—just Mother; but Julia had thrown herself into one of the newly unshrouded chairs. It gave a background of crimson to a long coat of embroidered pearl-grey silk. Oh, Julia was more like a princess than ever! And she looked sure of herself, not angry or afraid.

"Nobody asked you to interfere!" Terence Desmond bellowed at Mary. "Jule's *my* daughter, not yours."

This puzzled the child. How could Julia be her sister if Mother wasn't Jule's mother too?

Terry stared at Jule. What was there different about her, beside the clothes which were so much grander than anything she had worn before? Why—her hair had

turned from black to red, as red as Terry's own! It was true now, as that man had said; they *did* look alike, if a little girl could look like a big one.

The child longed to rush in and surprise Jule with a hug, but instinct held her back. She did not know that she ought not to listen to the conversation of grown-ups.

"I only repeated your own words," Mary replied. "If I'm not her mother I've always tried to act as a mother should. And to see her disgrace herself—"

"Oh, cut it out, Ma! Anyhow I haven't disgraced either of *you,*" Julia broke in. "My name's Juliet Divine. Nobody knows who my people are. And the way I'm fixed I don't want them to know. If I told Tom Perrin that my father and mother were caretakers, in an old lady's house on Long Island—"

"Curse Tom Perrin!" bawled Terence.

"You ought to bless him," said Julia. "I may do better some day, but I can't yet, and I never dared hope to do as well. Why, he's a millionaire! He'd marry me if he could."

"Why doesn't he make his wife get a divorce, then?"

"Nothing doing with her, and I don't want to be tied, though I'm not telling him that. Oh, I'll climb higher than Tom Perrin! He's a stepping-stone. Now do have a little horse sense! Tom's my biggest catch, but —he's not the first. How *do* you think I've lived the way I have, with things costing what they cost? It's late in the day to fuss, when I've rushed down to show off my smart clothes and car, and see what I can do for you all!"

"My God—to hear my daughter talk this way!" groaned Terence. But the rage had died out of his voice. Often it had been like that before, when Jule and Father had their "rows." If Mother interfered

Father turned against her and took Julia's part. Terry wondered who Tom Perrin was, and what it meant to be a "millionaire." Father looked suddenly reflective. Perhaps he too was thinking about millionaires.

"Well, I've said *my* say!" Mother sighed the words on a long breath. "You've told me to hold my tongue, Terence, and I will. I must hurry and get about my business, anyhow. With the ladies arriving this evening and expecting dinner, there's all I can handle and more."

So speaking, she pulled the white cover off the last chair, and was at the door before Terry could move and let her pass. If Mary could have done so unremarked, she would have swept her daughter away: but Julia caught sight of the pink gingham dress and sprang up. "Hello, sweetie!" she cried, her sullenness gone. Picking up the small sister, she kissed Terry as the child had never been kissed before.

While Father brooded in silence, scowling, Julia took the child on her grey chiffon lap, and explained that she had come partly to bring presents for the "kid." She was going away, perhaps before Terry's birthday, going to have a real good time, because she was rich now. The first cheque out of her new cheque book had bought an outfit for Miss Teresa, from hat to shoes! So there!

Terry would rather have had a doll than new clothes, though hers were old; but she would not hurt Julia by saying so. She put her arms round the beautiful, big girl's neck, thanked her, sniffed her heavenly perfume, and began to ask questions. *Was* Jule on the stage? What was the stage? And what had made her hair turn red?

"Oh, the stage is a sort of place where you dance or sing, or walk on and show yourself," said Julia.

"That's what *I* do. But I'm going on a ship soon. Maybe I won't be back on the stage much again—or maybe I will: just as I feel. And my hair has turned red because—well, *because*. I meant to stay here and visit a bit, but Mrs. Parmalee and Miss Sheen are coming, so everybody'll have to fly round and get things ready. I'll be better out of the way."

Mrs. Parmalee and Miss Sheen! They were coming to Silverwood. Terry was thrilled. This was the most exciting day of her life. Why were they coming? Oh, Julia hardly knew. The old dame had telegraphed to Ma. Hadn't Terry seen the boy bring the message? Well, he had brought it, and Ma had begun to tear around like a wet hen, before the motor car turned up. It was jolly selfish of Madam not to give longer notice, but there it *was!* And Julia must go.

She might, instead, have stayed and helped, but that didn't occur to her. Julia was not a girl you could imagine working, and if ever she had worked, Terry couldn't remember the time. It was two years since Julia had gone to New York, and had become a mysterious princess. Terry knew that it was two years, because Mother had said so, and two years was almost forever.

Julia offered to take her for a "spin" in the blue car, which would have been wonderful, but Mother wouldn't hear of it. "Terry's old enough to help me, and I need all the help I can get," she said. After that, Julia went at once, Father (half sullen, half admiring) shutting her into the car; and Terry would have cried if Mother hadn't looked so little, so pinched, and so harassed.

These happenings would have been enough in themselves to make a Milestone, but there were more to come before the day's end.

II

AT seven years old one knows more, and less, than "grown-ups" remember.

Terry knew a great many things. She knew about fairies, and the people in the Country of Dreams who were real, though it was better not to speak of them. She knew how to make flowers keep fresh when Mother would have thrown them in the ash-barrel. She remembered everything that she heard talked about by Father, Mother and Jule, who were the only persons in her daytime world. And that is why she knew about Mrs. Peter Parmalee and Betty Sheen in a general, "Who's Who" way, while knowing nothing of them as individuals.

Mrs. Peter Parmalee was an old lady, perhaps as old as seventy. Teresa pictured her with white hair, like that of the old ladies she saw when Mother took her into the village of Oldport, shopping. Mrs. Parmalee's husband had died many years ago. Nowadays she lived across the sea, in Paris; and with her lived the only grandchild, Betty Sheen, who was grown up, seventeen; Julia's age.

Betty's father, who had married Mrs. Parmalee's daughter, had been an artist. That was why he'd lived in Paris. It seemed that artists liked to live in Paris. But he was dead, and so was his wife. There had been an automobile accident. Betty had no one left except her grandmother, though the village heard that she was engaged to a rich young man named Miles Sheridan, a "great match" even for such an important girl as Betty Sheen. Like Betty he had lost his parents when he was

a child. Long ago he had spent his holidays with Mrs. Parmalee; but that was before Paris. It must have been in this very house, Silverwood, in prehistoric days before Terry was born.

The child didn't waste many thoughts upon Miles Sheridan, for she knew no young men with whom to compare him; but she imagined that Betty Sheen would be beautiful and kind, like Julia. It was splendid that the ladies were coming to Silverwood. She pictured them as visitors, her mother and father as host and hostess.

Terry ran about after Mary, dusting furniture with a feather duster, when her mother had swept. They got ready the drawing-room, dining-room, Mrs. Parmalee's immense bedroom and Betty's adjoining, which was smaller, but interesting because of the things stored there. When the Desmonds first came to Silverwood (rheumatic fever had turned Terence to caretaking after a career as a riding master) these things were already in the house. They had been left behind when Betty went back to Paris after a visit to Grandma in America. Little silk and muslin dresses, Leghorn hats wreathed with roses or wildflowers, and delicate shoes. These relics had spent the years asleep in a cedar-lined wardrobe built into the wall: and on the floor of the wardrobe were ranged toys which, no doubt, had been too big to travel. There was a dolls' house, a Noah's Ark, and a Teddy Bear so adorable that Teresa would have given her own best treasures (including the long red curls which the village people praised) if she could have owned it. She had never been allowed to play with the toy, however, though she saw it when Mother aired this most fascinating room at Silverwood.

Next door to Betty's and opening into it, was a little

room originally intended for the dressing room of a married couple. Now, it would be occupied by the ladies' maid; for Mrs. Parmalee had telegraphed, "Just landed New York. No time write in advance. Will arrive Silverwood evening June 14th for dinner staying only two days business. Not necessary get servants. Hope you can manage. Please prepare my room and Miss Sheen's also adjoining one for French maid."

Terry dared to hope that Betty, now too old for the Teddy Bear, would give it to her. There might be chocolates, too. The maid would help Mother in the housework, and everything would be delightful.

These were things that the child knew or thought of Mrs. Parmalee and Miss Sheen. One of the things she did not know or think was, that she was of no more importance in Mrs. Parmalee's house than a fly, a destructive and unwanted fly.

It was only when she and Mother were shelling peas for dinner that Terry received her first shock.

"Do you suppose Betty Sheen will give me the Teddy Bear?" she couldn't resist asking.

"*Miss* Sheen," corrected Mary. "No, I don't suppose she'll give you that or anything. She probably won't know you exist. Now, mind, Teresa, you're not to go *near* the ladies. You're not to show yourself upstairs while they're here, or play in the garden, unless the kitchen garden. In the house you must keep to our own part."

Mary meant every word, Terry know. The child was called "Teresa" only in serious moments, or when Mother (a school teacher as a girl) taught her the multiplication table, and horrid facts like that. Terry was not even asked to promise obedience. Mary took that for granted. But—though the basement was nice,

Terry loved "upstairs"; the large rooms whose pictures and dim, haunted mirrors were shrouded with mosquito netting, as the massive furniture was shrouded with white calico.

The basement, where the Desmonds lived, was pleasant enough. It was cellar-like only in front, for at the back, all the windows looked out through an ivy-draped trellis onto a garden full of flowers. There were three good bedrooms, with pretty patchwork quilts on the beds, and rag carpets on the floor, and Mary had made one-half of the kitchen into a sitting-room. Still, upstairs was "fairyland." It called, it lured, especially after two taxis from the nearest railway town had brought the ladies and their maid and luggage to the house. Terry, hiding, had seen the arrival: and Mother, helped by a black woman whom Father had grumpily fetched from Oldport, had forgotten the child.

Mrs. Parmalee was very strange to see! She was old, but old in a different way from other people's oldness. She had wrinkles all over her face, even on her eyelids, but she was white and pink, like Terry herself, and her hair wasn't grey; it was a dark sort of crimson. She had a beautiful figure, only rather stiff, and Terry had never seen such a handsome grey dress and cloak except the lovely things Julia had worn that day. More interesting, however, was Miss Sheen. Terry had a chance for a look at her while Mrs. Parmalee explained with stateliness to Father why they had started unexpectedly for America. They stood grouped on the porch, and Terry crouched behind a laurel bush. Betty was pretty, with waved hair so fair that it was almost more silver than gold. She had big, turquoise blue eyes, complexion like the inside of a shell, and a pouting, pink mouth. She looked rather bored and in-

different, even when Mrs. Parmalee told how Mr. Miles Sheridan had had a bad accident playing polo: but when her grandmother announced that "Mr. Sheridan and Miss Sheen would probably be married in a few months' time" the girl suddenly smiled. A dimple came close to her mouth, in each cheek, and her teeth were perfect, small and gleaming like the lovely beads Julia had worn that morning—beads she called "pearls, *real* pearls."

Terry *couldn't* keep downstairs!

There was a Japanese gong on an old chest in the hall. The black woman, Nancibell Washington, went up and struck it when dinner was ready. After she had flopped heavily back to the basement again (the French maid had consented to wait at table) Terry stole up, to lurk behind a Spanish leather screen.

The old lady and the young one sailed down from their bedrooms. They wore low-necked dresses such as the child had seen pictured in magazines. Mrs. Parmalee was talking of things she wished to take away from Silverwood to some hotel in New York. Josephine, the maid, had begun already to collect these things, it seemed. *Oh, what if the Teddy Bear had been collected?*

Teresa could not endure the thought that he might go. But, if he must, she wanted to bid him good-bye. She would do no harm. The ladies wouldn't see her, so they couldn't be cross. She'd run up while they were at dinner. Besides, it was more *her* house than theirs! She had a right to go anywhere in her own home.

The stairway and the upper halls blazed with light for the first time in Terry's knowledge. She made straight for Betty's room, and found it lighted too.

Miss Sheen hadn't troubled to press the electric switch.

A trunk was wide open. Several dresses lay on the bed. A delicious perfume filled the room. Jewels were scattered on the dressing-table, but Terry scarcely glanced at these things. Her eyes were caught by the bear, which had been torn from its place in the wardrobe and—oh, shame!—thrust head down into a big barrel-like waste-paper basket.

The child snatched the plush monster as a mother might snatch an abused baby. "Dear, darling one!" she cooed.

But the sound of her own voice frightened the child. What if somebody had heard? The maid might run up, retrieve the toy, and order her away.

It did not strike Terry that, if she left the bear in the basket, it would fall into her possession sooner or later. She was too excited for prudent thoughts. Her beloved must be rescued.

For a moment she stood still, listening. There was no sound. All was safe! Every one was busy downstairs. A thrill ran through her veins. How glad she was that she had been in time! The Teddy Bear was *hers*. And she could look at the things scattered about the room.

The plush bear under her arm, Terry gravitated to the dressing-table. A mirror hung above it, slightly tilted. She looked up and met her own eyes. The light from a pink-shaded electric lamp set her hair on fire. It was strange how much she was like Julia! Julia was beautiful. Why, then *she* must be beautiful, too!

Some queer vision came to the child of herself, grown up. She would have gold-topped bottles and jars with monograms in blue stones like these on Betty Sheen's

dressing-table. She would have perfumes, and sweet-smelling powder like this in the cut-glass bowl, which Betty had left uncovered.

Terry bent down and sniffed at the powder puff. The scent was heavenly. The same fragrance came from a bottle whose silver-gilt top was not screwed on. Ecstasy swept over the child. She must, *must* have some of that sweetness! It couldn't be stealing to take a drop.

The bear left only one hand free. She lifted off the turquoise-monogrammed top, and tipped the bottle against the breast of her frock. Oh, how lovely! Nothing had ever been so nice!

"Mon Dieu!" squealed a shrill voice at the door.

Terry started; and then everything dreadful happened at once. It was like the end of the world.

III

THE perfume spilled. Terry was drenched with it. Somehow the bear's hind leg must have caught in the strip of lace on the dressing-table. Off came the lace, and gold and glass came with it. Powder rose from the floor like white smoke. A box of chocolates turned upside down, and small brown shapes scattered like frightened mice. Stepping back, Terry trod on two or three, crushing them into the carpet.

"Petite bête! Petite diable!" shrieked Josephine, who had been sent up to fetch scarves for the ladies' shoulders.

She sprang at the guilty one, and shook her fiercely. No one had ever shaken Terry before, not even Father. The child was dumb with horror, but she clung to the brown bear. Josephine boxed her ears very hard, so hard that Terry's head spun as if a top were going round inside, and for an instant she almost lost consciousness. Then she became aware, through a shower of sparks, that Betty Sheen stood in the doorway.

Betty must have run up, hearing the Frenchwoman's cries. To the bewildered child the figure in white was welcome as an angel. Escaping from Josephine, she staggered across the room, sure of help and sanctuary. Of course Miss Sheen would hold out kind arms and say, "Poor little thing! She meant no harm. Don't hurt her!"

But no. Betty did nothing angelic. She pushed the offender roughly away before her dress could be touched, and Terry fell.

"Who *is* the little brute? How dare she come into my room and throw my things about!" the girl exclaimed. "All my powder, and that lovely Paris perfume spilt! Oh, and *look* at the chocolates. The carpet's spoiled. Disgusting! Is she a thief?"

"It is a child of the servants, Mademoiselle," said Josephine, in English. "I saw her in the basement. But she must have come to steal. See, she has taken that toy; and maybe other things."

By this time Terry had stumbled to her feet, brought to her senses by that word "steal."

"I'm not a thief!" she gasped. "You're wicked to call me that. You're both wicked. I took Teddy because—I love him, and you'd thrown him away."

"You're an impudent brat!" snapped Miss Sheen, eyes very bright, cheeks scarlet. "Josephine, take that thing away from her. She shan't have it."

Josephine, nothing loth, grasped Terry by the shoulder. But suddenly the child saw red. She felt that cruel forces of injustice were arrayed against her. All that was deepest in herself resisted. She struggled silently at first, then, when Josephine had wrenched her arm, she gave one cry, seized the Frenchwoman's dress and tore it from the waistband.

Betty and the maid both screamed, actually frightened by the little fury with the passion-pale face, blazing dark eyes and mane of flame-red hair.

Downstairs, the alarm had been given. Mrs. Parmalee had hurried to the foot of the stairs when Betty ran up; and stood there calling on Desmond for help. There were burglars in the bedrooms! Miss Sheen was being murdered!

The caretaker, big and handsome still, though lamed with rheumatism, made a fine showing with an old-

fashioned pistol as he limped to the rescue; but that desperate cry from Terry reached Mary Desmond's ears and waked her mother-courage. Some one was hurting her child! The mild woman became a tigress.

She pushed past Desmond on the stairs, and reached the door of the lighted bedroom before him. Instantly Terry flew to her arms—the eternal refuge! But she did not shed tears, or accuse Betty and Josephine. Something kept her silent, some mystic race-memory forbade the child to throw the blame on others, though she had lost her first sense of guilt. It was Miss Sheen and her maid who broke into accusations. "Take the creature away!" Betty shrilled. "She's a little beast—a thief. She sneaked in here to steal my things. I'm going to tell grandmother, and have you all discharged."

Desmond was in time to hear these words, and his temper blazed up. He himself might have called the child "names," but no one else should do it.

"Discharge us indeed!" he flung at Miss Sheen. "We'll discharge ourselves, damn it! And damn you for your lie. My daughter's no thief. Who are you to treat me like the dirt underfoot, you little upstart? Me that has the blood of kings in my veins! I'll go down now and warn your old grandmother that we'll not stay the night in her cursed house."

. . . . . .

They did stay the night, but Mrs. Parmalee had to beg Desmond to remain. She appealed to his chivalry, his wife's sense of decorum. She and her grand-daughter must not be abandoned, left helpless, in a lonely house at night. Perhaps, in the end, the storm might have blown over with mutual concessions, if it had not been for Betty Sheen. But Betty did not easily forgive or forget.

When Mrs. Parmalee had heard the story from both sides, she urged upon her grand-daughter the fact that as caretakers the Desmonds were perfect. They were of a superior class, yet had no airs. They were honest. The woman had kept the house in good condition, and the man looked after the whole place to a certain extent. What if he had a hot temper? What if the child was pert and spoiled? In future the little pest could be confined to the basement.

Betty, however, would not "look over" what had passed. If the Desmonds stayed, it would be their triumph, her defeat. Miss Sheen said that she would "hate Silverwood, if those people were in it," and Mrs. Parmalee didn't want her grand-daughter to hate Silverwood. She herself had come there as a bride. She wished Betty to come as a bride, and live in the house with Miles Sheridan who had loved it in his boyhood. She did not, therefore, insist. The Desmonds were merely asked to stay until they had been replaced. And the day of the flitting was Terry's second milestone.

IV

THE child had to travel far, however, before the third milestone was in sight.

Of course there was much of interest along the way, yet she missed Silverwood, its silences, and the garden where she had "played fairies."

There was no "playing fairies" at the new home. But it was their very own, and Father lost no chance to impress upon his family what a fine chance they had got—all through Julia.

At Silverwood, Terry had heard her parents talk of two small, adjoining houses by the shore, not far from Oldport. Terence's dream was to buy the dilapidated "shacks" which had stood empty for years, repair them, throw the two into one, and open a "road house." But there had been no hope of the dream being realised, until Julia's friend, Tom Perrin, made it possible. She did not tell Perrin what her father had been: gave him vaguely to understand that "Dad's investments had gone to smash," and that, after years of retirement, the poor man must go into business again. Perrin motored to Oldport with Julia (there was little he wouldn't have done to please her), saw the "shacks," met Desmond, and heard the scheme. It was not a bad scheme, Perrin thought; and with a good-looking, well-mannered fellow like Desmond there might be money in it. The shacks had a bad reputation: a woman had been murdered in one about ten years before, by the man next door. Neither house had ever been occupied again.

Desmond believed that with three thousand dollars he could repair the buildings and, with interior changes to suit his plan, could add a broad verandah. Then, with a thousand dollars more as capital, he'd open a restaurant for "sea food," a few small private dining-rooms, and a big room for dancing, with a band consisting of coloured musicians.

Perrin agreed to lend the money, at nominal interest; Terence more than forgave Julia; and when the Desmonds moved from Silverwood they moved into two hastily furnished rooms of the new habitation.

It was fun to live by the sea. When the workmen came, they gave Terry bits of bright glass and long golden curls made of wood shavings. But there was no garden, only a stretch of green with a few trees in front of the house, and enough room at the back for a garage. Terry feared that no fairies would care to come here; still she was happy enough, and Father was good-humoured.

Time went on, and by autumn his dream of success had taken shape and colour; the colour of summer seas and sky; for Desmond decided to call his road-house "The Blue Moon Inn." His "ad" was to be "Once in a Blue Moon You Find Perfection. Here it is!" The wording was supplied by Tom Perrin, who had made his fortune as head of an advertising agency. The carrying out of the idea in colour was Julia's.

The low wooden roofs of the wide, glassed-in verandahs, which formed the restaurant, were turquoise blue, outside and in. So were the old wooden shutters, left just as they had been, on the white clapboarded fronts of the transformed houses. These windows, on the lower floor, now opened upon the verandah restaurant and a large blue dancing saloon, their bright, small

panes giving a quaint effect under the blue roof hung with Chinese lanterns.

Upstairs the little windows gazed, as of old, upon the calm of the ancient harbour; but within all was changed. The bare bedchambers had been turned into coquettish pink and blue dining-rooms for two: and as these were to be a popular feature of the Blue Moon Inn, only two bedrooms were reserved for the family.

The place was ready to open at Christmas. There were no servants living in the house, but Mary undertook the cooking, helped by black Nancibell Washington and Nancibell's daughter, who washed dishes. Nancibell's husband and son were the waiters; and two "coon" cousins, with the aid of a gramophone, became the band. Terence Desmond sat at a desk or walked about looking impressive.

Julia, whose relationship to the Desmonds was unknown except to Perrin, brought motor-loads of friends to dance and enjoy fresh fish and oysters taken from the inn's private sea-water "reserve." Mrs. Desmond's lobster à la Newburg, her panned oysters, broiled shad, chicken fried in cream, and waffles or griddle cakes became famous. The Blue Moon soon rose to the zenith of success, and Desmond was repaying the debt to Perrin.

By this time, however, Julia no longer came to Oldport with Tom. Indeed, she herself came less often than when the inn was new. Something had happened between her and Perrin; Terry didn't know what. Life was crowded, huddled and confused at the Blue Moon. There was coming and going all day, after noon, and most of the night too. The child never saw her sister alone. She could not ask what had become of the big, red-faced man whom she had disliked because

he wanted to kiss her. She was glad not to see him any more, and she supposed that "being on the stage" again kept Julia busy. When Jule did come, however, she looked more beautiful each time, it seemed. Also her clothes were handsomer. She never forgot to bring a toy, or a book, or a box of chocolates, and to Terry she still remained a princess, who lived in the mysterious splendour of New York.

By and by three years had passed since the rising of the Blue Moon. Terry was ten and had never been to school. Mother found time to give her an hour's lessons each morning, and Mother had not forgotten her accomplishments as a teacher of children. Though life was full of bustle, yet it was monotonous, until suddenly a milestone loomed through the sea-mists: the greatest milestone of all.

One December night Terry was asleep in her tiny room which adjoined the larger quarters where Father and Mother slept. It was a long time since she had dreamed of Silverwood: but, half waking, she became conscious of a dream about the terrible Josephine, Betty Sheen's maid.

Josephine was shrieking at her. She had dragged the Teddy Bear away and seemed to have gone insane, because she was pounding its head against the wall. There must be iron under the brown plush, because the head made a loud, thudding noise every time it struck.

The screaming had stopped, but the thudding went on, and in the midst of it Terry could hear voices. There were several voices, among them Father's and—yes, Betty Sheen's. It was queer, they did not sound cross! Now Mother was talking, and a man, not Father. Oh, but he had a beautiful voice, not like the voices of

those men who came to eat and drink and dance at the Blue Moon.

These voices seemed so real that it was hard to believe they were in a dream. Still, they must be:—no, they were not! Somebody was shaking her arm. Somebody was waking her up. Her eyes were open. The room was flooded with light.

"Get a move on, kid," Father was saying. "Your bed's wanted. There's been an accident."

V

INSTANTLY the child was wide awake.

"Is any one killed?" she asked.

"No, nobody killed or hurt," Desmond answered. "Come along. Stir your stumps. Your mother'll be here with clean sheets. She'll tell you about it. I've got to see what there is to eat and drink."

While Terry struggled to fasten her dress, Mary appeared, her arms full of bed linen.

"It's an auto broken down," she explained, "nearly in front of the house. The people roused your father and me, tooting their horn, and the motor was making a horrid noise, too. Nothing will budge the car, and it's come on to rain hard,—a cold, freezing rain. The people want us to take them in. I never was more surprised in my life than to see who one of them is. You'd never guess. Miss Sheen."

"Oh, Mother, that hateful girl!" the child exclaimed. "I don't want her to be in *my* bed!"

"She won't be," Mary said. "She and the lady who's with her, a paid companion, I guess, will have the big bed in the next room, and the young man Miss Sheen's engaged to will be put in here. You and Father and I must do the best we can in two of the little private dining-rooms, and the chauffeur'll sleep in the car. I'll make up a bed for you on a sofa. It's after twelve now, so the night won't be long; and I expect the car'll be ready for a start in the morning."

"Did you let Miss Sheen in to pour coals of fire on her head?" Terry gravely enquired.

Mary Desmond laughed. "You funny child! Well,

maybe there was some such idea in our minds. Anyhow, Father wouldn't think it was business to refuse people shelter."

"I don't want to see Miss Sheen," Terry said. "I wish she wasn't going to marry that man with the nice voice. I thought she was married long ago."

"We thought so too," said Mother. "But the companion—quite a pleasant woman—was telling me about Mrs. Parmalee. We knew she never came back to Silverwood after she went to New York three years ago. But there was no one to give us news. It seems the poor old lady got sick, and the doctors sent her to some cure place in France. Miss Sheen was with her, of course. But the cure did no good. They went back to Paris, and Mrs. Parmalee lingered on, till a month ago. Mr. Sheridan—that's the young man—travelled over to see the ladies several times, but for some reason he and Miss Sheen didn't marry. It would have been a sad sort of wedding with the old lady so sick: but now it's to be soon; and the three were on their way to Silverwood when the auto went wrong. Miss Sheen has to meet her grandmother's lawyer at Silverwood, and clear up some business. She was quite pleasant, and looks pretty as a picture in her mourning."

"Did she—say anything about me?" Terry stammered, her heart beating.

"Not a word. I expect she's forgotten. She wouldn't have recognized us, if I hadn't blurted out her name."

Teresa asked no more questions. But it was queer that she should have dreamed of Josephine and the long-lost Teddy when a car with Miss Sheen in it hooted and thundered before the door.

She was too highly keyed to sleep during what remained of that night, and the sofa was so narrow that

the child was glad to get up with the first flicker of daylight. Nobody else seemed to be stirring, however. The house was still, save for Father's loud, regular breathing in the next room. He and Mother slept on a mattress laid on the floor. They were not disturbed by constant threats of falling out! As for the visitors, they were no doubt resting cosily in the clean, fresh beds given to them. Terry was the martyr.

Wrapped in a shawl of her mother's, with her clothes over her arm, she stole out of the pink and blue dining-room. There were no toilet arrangements there, and the child planned to wash and dress in the kitchen before any one else came down. Then she would be able to run out of doors so that Miss Sheen wouldn't see her.

Terry splashed valiantly in a big tin basin of cold water, slipped into her clothing in haste as the light grew, but felt untidy and wretched because her masses of hair were uncombed, unbrushed. She was hungry, too, and as Mother might not be down for half an hour, the child began poking at the remains of fire in the range. Close by stood a full scuttle of coal, but it was heavy, and no shovel could be seen.

Difficulties roused Terry's spirit. She tried to lift the scuttle, found that she could not, and began to drag it across the floor. The piled lumps of coal fell with a noise which seemed loud in the sleeping house.

"Oh, *bother!*" exclaimed the child, and bent her energies to picking up the scattered lumps. "I'm so hungry! I'm *so* cold!"

It was then that the electric light was switched on and a voice spoke behind her, at the door.

"Hello!" it said. "Are you Cinderella?"

Terry jumped to her feet, and turned.

She had never heard any voice like this, until last night, so she knew whose it was; that of "the young man who was going to marry Miss Sheen." How thankful she was that she'd finished dressing! The thought of this narrow escape brought the blood to her face; and the creature who whirled round to face Miles Sheridan was a childish vision of rose-white and red-gold. She amazed him even more than he amazed her, for somehow Terry was not surprised that the man of the voice should be black-browed and thin, with a dark eager face brown as a gipsy's. She believed now that a true image of him had come into her mind when she heard him speak last night. He was just what she'd expected and she wondered what it was in her that made him stare. Perhaps he was thinking her rude because she hadn't answered his question. She would hate him to think that!

"I've often *played* I'm Cinderella," she explained.

The young man smiled. He had very white teeth and the smile was like a sudden light in darkness. Before it came, though he had been looking quite good-natured, there'd been a hardness about his clean-shaven face. His nose was rather like the nose of a man in a picture which hung in Father and Mother's bedroom: the picture of some English soldier-Duke who had lived in old days. This man's eyes were light, though his brows and lashes were so black. The thought of pools flashed through Terry's nature-loving mind, pools among dark reeds when the sun is high.

"Then I suppose it was your fairy godmother who routed me out of bed and sent me down at this unearthly hour to help you with that coal, Miss Cinderella," he laughed. Lifting the heavy scuttle as if it were a basket of flowers, he poured enough coal into the dying

fire to renew without choking it. "There!" he said. "That's right for the moment. Is it Cinderella's job to get breakfast these cold mornings?"

Terry shook her head shyly. She began to explain that she hadn't been able to sleep on a sofa, in a strange room, but remembered that it was because of him she'd been banished to both. She stopped, and blushed again.

"Poor little Cinderella!" the young man pitied her. "I'm afraid you were turned out of your room for me. I wouldn't have let that happen, if I'd known, but it didn't occur to me there might be a third member of the family here! It's a shame! They might have put *me* anywhere; I'd have been all right. It was mighty good of you and your people to give up your rooms to us. I don't know what the ladies would have done without you! Maybe Miss Sheen would like to be your fairy godmother, Cinderella. You must see her before we go. I got up early, to find my chauffeur, and—"

"Oh, no!" Terry broke out. "Please—I don't want to see Miss Sheen. She—she doesn't like me."

The young man stared more than ever. "Why, she doesn't know you exist."

"Yes, she does," Terry confessed.

"When did you meet her?"

"I—don't want to tell you," came in a whisper. Sheridan could see only the top of the child's head and floods of tangled, bright red curls.

"But I *want* you to tell. Look here, Cinderella, how do you know I'm not the Prince, giving you a royal command?"

Somehow, he dragged the story from her, and listened gravely, as to an affair of state.

"So you used to live at Silverwood?" he said, thoughtfully.

Terry nodded, her lips quivering.

"I lived there, too, when I was a little boy. I loved the place. Did you?"

"Oh, yes!" she breathed.

Sheridan reflected for a minute. "Are you too old for a Teddy Bear now?" he wanted to know. "A big one, with a squeak and eyes that move?"

Terry's heart beat fast. "I—I'd rather be true to *that* Teddy Bear, thank you," she answered. "Another one wouldn't be the same. I loved him too much."

"You're a loyal little thing," Miles Sheridan praised her. "Well, I must think of something else to do, to make up for the past. Would you like—a surprise?"

"I'd love it, if—it didn't come from Miss Sheen, please," replied the too truthful Terry. "I'd rather she needn't even *know*. It would be spoiled if she did."

Miss Sheen's fiancé was amused rather than offended. He promised that he himself would think out the surprise, and Betty should be told nothing. As a reward for this promise, he made Cinderella answer a number of questions: whether she liked life at the Inn as well as at Silverwood: whether she went to school: what she wanted to be when she grew up. He seemed interested to hear that she didn't like the Blue Moon, because it was too noisy; that she had lessons at home, but Mother wished to send her to a convent school, where she would grow up quiet and gentle, not like the girls who came to the inn, and laughed so loudly and smoked, and danced queer dances, and talked slang. She wouldn't be able to do what Mother wanted, though: Father said it would cost too much money.

Mary Desmond appeared in the midst of this conversation, astonished to find the fire alight, and Mr. Sheridan in the kitchen. He apologised, saying that

he'd come down to consult the chauffeur, but passing the open door had seen "Miss Cinderella" struggling with the coal scuttle.

Terry had a bad moment, then, realising that she ought not to have told about Betty and the bear. She feared that "the Prince" might inadvertently betray her, but he did not. He gave the impression—without fibbing—that he had known all along of the Desmonds' past at Silverwood. Terry loved him for his consideration and felt passionately grateful. She knew now that she could trust him, and wasn't worried when Mother sent her upstairs with a message to Father.

Shaving water had to be taken, and various other errands run. Later, when Betty Sheen's too well remembered voice was heard, the child bolted like a rabbit to the little pink-and-blue room where she had slept. She longed to see Miles Sheridan again. It seemed to her that never had she wished for anything as much. He was so kind, so handsome, so wonderful—a real Prince. And he had said that he would be *her* Prince —"Cinderella's Prince"! Still, Terry couldn't go where Miss Sheen was, not even to see *him*. She *couldn't!*

"Now they're having breakfast," she thought. "Now they'll be going."

She heard the sound of the motor, and, peeping out of the window, saw the large grey limousine which had been rolled into the garage for the night. The chauffeur had repaired it, as Mother had prophesied, in time for an early start.

Fascinated, the child watched the smart suitcases being piled in. Next, the ladies stepped into the car, Betty first, despite the age of her meek-looking companion. Terry did not see Miss Sheen's face, but there

was a gleam of pale gold hair under a mourning toque, and Betty's figure at twenty or twenty-one was only a little plumper than at seventeen. It gave the child a pang that her Prince Charming should belong to Betty!

Now he was getting into the car. He was so slim that his back looked boyish, though he was twenty-three or twenty-four. She might not see his face again—ever. But—yes, he had stopped. He turned, glanced up, and caught sight of Terry at the window. He smiled, that humorous, unforgettable smile, and taking off his hat as if she were a grown-up girl, waved it. Then he jumped into the car, and it slid away.

The child was still at the window when Mother came running up, out of breath from the haste she had made. "Oh, my baby!" she panted. "The most wonderful thing! That dear young man knew about our trouble with Mrs. Parmalee, and how badly we were treated. He loved her: she was like a mother or grandmother to him, so he wants to atone to us for her sake. He asked me about you—and sending you to school. I told him my great wish. He made me tell! And he's *going to pay for the convent for you*—seven years of it! He's got Father to consent, too! My baby'll be safe, far away from the ugly things here till she's a big girl, seventeen years old. Think of that!"

"Oh, Mother, why does he do it for me?" Terry asked, in Mary's arms.

"I don't know, except for what he said: to 'atone.' And because he's kind." Mary kept to herself Sheridan's last words: "Your little daughter is the most beautiful child I ever saw. You're right not to want her brought up at a roadhouse. It wouldn't do. She ought to amount to something in future."

It was best not to put "ideas" in the "Baby's" head.

VI

THE convent was not more than forty miles away, yet after she was twelve Terry did not go home for her holidays. Mother came to visit her instead, but could never stay long: a few days at most.

"*Why* can't I go home with you?" the child pleaded. Always she was answered evasively, and the true reason dawned upon the girl's mind only as she grew older.

The Blue Moon Inn was popular with a rowdy crowd of young men and women, and Father drank more and more heavily. His temper couldn't be counted on. Altogether Terry would have been glad not to return, if Mother could have paid longer visits, and if Julia had come often to the convent. But Julia never came. Instead she sent presents and sometimes picture post-cards. By this time a great war was going on in Europe, and America had joined. Women were eagerly helping, and when Terry asked Mother if Julia were "knitting or something," Mary, slightly embarrassed, said yes, she supposed so. All the girls in the convent school knitted and sewed and made bandages for the soldiers. Terry applied herself to this work with secret joy, almost with passion, because Mother had read in some paper that the "Prince"—Miles Sheridan—had gone to France. Who could tell that by some chance he mightn't happen to wear a scarf *she* had knitted? She might even have tried to get his address, so as to post him a scarf with a note "from Cinderella," if she hadn't felt sure she must long ago have been forgotten. The Prince had, it seemed, sent Mother the whole sum

needed for "Cinderella's" schooling, in one big cheque soon after his adventure at the inn. Then, a few weeks later, he had married Miss Sheen, and there had been no further correspondence.

Terry prayed every night for the Prince's safety in the fighting. And as she prayed, with eyes tight shut, she saw the dark face lit with its brilliant smile, as it had been when he waved his hat for good-bye—good-bye forever! She wondered if Betty Sheen (Terry hated to think of her as Betty Sheridan) prayed too? It was hard to imagine Betty praying!

One early spring day when Terry was sixteen, an older girl beckoned her to the garden seat where three of the class ahead of hers were sitting together. Somehow they had managed secretly to get hold of a newspaper, or part of one; the "Society" and theatrical pages of a Sunday supplement. "Look at this," said the girl who had called Terry. "Rose and Mame and I think it's the image of you."

The newspaper fragment had been folded very small, and hidden between the leaves of a lesson book. The girl half opened the volume, and Terry peeped in.

What she saw was an enlarged snapshot of a beautiful young woman with a splendidly developed yet slender figure generously shown in bathing dress. Her head was swathed in a handkerchief-cap, and the big eyes smiled into the camera. This alluring creature had a background of sands and surf. "Juliet Divine at Palm Beach," the picture was labelled.

Terry bit back the cry "Why, it's my sister!" She remembered that, for some unknown reason, Father and Mother and Julia wished the relationship kept secret. Julia's "being on the stage" was the excuse, yet Terry felt vaguely that there was something more.

Long ago at Silverwood the child had seen the resemblance: and now she had grown up (sixteen seemed grown up!) it was more marked. The snapshot might almost be a portrait of Teresa, not Julia, Desmond, except for the full development of the figure. The younger girl was already as tall as Julia, but she had the sword-like slenderness of a boy.

"I wonder if Jule has war work to do at that place by the sea, Palm Beach," she thought. "Or maybe she's gone there to rest." Terry determined to write and ask, begging Julia to answer, which she seldom or never did. Julia hadn't changed her address since the day when she first motored to Silverwood in the smart blue car. The only difference was that she'd moved into a bigger apartment in the same house on Riverside Drive.

The November before Terry's seventeenth birthday the war ended. Every one was joyous on Armistice Day. There were rejoicings even at the convent whose peace had not been broken. It was a happy winter, though Terry began to ask herself what would happen when the summer holidays came. The seven years' schooling specified and paid for by Miles Sheridan would be at an end. Would she go home? Or, would Mother have saved up money to keep her at the convent a year longer, according to a secret plan. "At eighteen your character ought to be formed, and you can go into the world to earn your own living," she had said. "That will be better than staying in a house like ours. You can find a good, quiet place, as a stenographer perhaps."

Since then Terry had taken up typing and shorthand with one of the nuns who had had a business education.

"Mother'll tell me at Easter what I'm to do," she thought.

But Mother did not come at Easter. She wrote a short letter in an unsteady hand. Her love, and, she was so disappointed, she had taken a bad cold. It was on her lungs, and the doctor ordered her to lie in bed, but her little girl mustn't worry.

After that a week passed without a word, though Terry wrote every day. Then, one morning, a telegram came for "Miss Teresa Desmond," the first she had ever received.

"Mother died suddenly pneumonia. No time send for you. Funeral yesterday. Get couple of mourning dresses my expense. Will send money fare home. Wish you return for good next week I need your help. Will settle all expenses. Terence Desmond."

The girl could hardly believe that her mother was gone, that she would never see her again. The Sisters tried to comfort her, but she could not be consoled. They told her to cry, and her grief would be softened, but no tears would come. As a child she had never cried since Terence had jeered at Mary in her hearing. "What's the use of squeezing all that juice out of your face? It doesn't cut any ice."

That was true. "Squeezing juice out of your face" was futile, though your heart was broken. Terry had learned so well to control her tears that now she could not shed them when she would. But the girl felt bitterly that she could never forgive her father for not telegraphing sooner. Even if there had not been time to see Mary alive, she might have kissed the dear face in its coffin. The girl had never loved the moody, bad-tempered, sullen man who was her father, though she had childishly admired his bigness and good looks. Now she knew that she must, for her mother's sake, try not to hate him.

Ten days later Terry went home, one of the nuns taking her as far as Oldport, where Terence Desmond was at the station.

The girl had not seen her father since she was twelve. He had changed startlingly, though not through grief. She was sure it was not through grief! His black eyes, which had been big and bold, were now curtained by folds of skin, and beneath were purplish bags. He had developed a double chin. His once fresh, sunburnt skin was veined and mottled. His nose appeared to be bigger and was seamed with the same small, purple-red veins that patterned his cheeks. The thick hair which Terry remembered as bright auburn threaded with white, was now white threaded with auburn. Even the man's figure was different. He stooped, and his body looked loose and slouching in the not inexpensive but untidy clothes he wore.

"Well, you've grown up," he said, staring, with a gaze that appraised the pale girl from head to foot. "You're damned like Jule! But only a copy of her, in water colour paints. You'll never be the stunner *she* is."

Julia was his darling, the one creature for whom he cared. Perhaps Julia's mother, the wife of his youth, had been more to him than the meek yet obstinate Mary. His namesake's likeness to the elder girl did not move him enough for a kiss. There was hostility and something like disgust in Terry's eyes. He must have read the look. He had always spoken of her to Mary as *"your* daughter," never as "ours." But he meant to rule her now.

Terry had been brought home to work; or so she supposed. That was only fair, after seven happy years

at the convent, and she resolved to take her mother's place in the house, as well as she could.

Not many hours passed, however, before she realised that whatever she was wanted for, it was not to fill her mother's place. Terence had made quite another plan; and when the girl arrived at the Blue Moon it was to find a cook-housekeeper installed; a handsome dark German woman of middle age, naturalised American.

Mrs. Shultz was a widow, with an eye that languished at her employer. Terry detested her at sight and was glad, at first, that she herself was to be a kind of secretary-cashier, writing her father's letters and keeping accounts. This work would keep her out of Mrs. Shultz's way except at meals. But she shrank from the idea of the desk in the restaurant, where Desmond himself had sat in early days of the inn.

"I'm sure Mother wouldn't like it for me," she objected. "Even when I was a little girl, she hated to have me come in there."

"Well, your Mother isn't here now to nag and pick faults," growled Terence. "I'm the only boss. You've learned arithmetic, I know. Your mother boasted enough about a prize you got! You'll need a bit of coaching from me before you can check up the bills, and give the right change without turning a hair. But there's nothing in it, if you've got a head on your shoulders, and you ought to have after seven years' schooling."

"Couldn't I do the same work in your office?" Terry argued. "I've been in a quiet place so long, I don't feel as if I could keep my head in a noisy crowd."

"You've been damn well spoiled, that's the matter

with you," said Terence. "Sheridan was a nut to shell out all that oof for your fancy education. Just throwing good money to the dogs! But it's gone now, every cent, and you're old enough to earn your keep. *Jule* never had your advantages. She was out in the world for herself before she was sixteen; yet look at her. A rich woman, rolling round Buenos Aires this minute in her automobile, with an apartment in a New York palace to come home to. You've got to do as I say—see? I'll give you a few tips. Then you can take your place at that desk and prove you're fit to earn your salt. You won't have trouble with any one. If you do, call me. But don't squeal unless you must. Make a note of that."

After this understanding had been reached, Terence Desmond was free to stroll among his favourite customers, and a girl with gorgeous red hair and a plain black dress sat in his old place at the desk in the blue-roofed restaurant.

VII

TERRY did not know what to make of her life at the Blue Moon.

After the peace of the Convent it was pandemonium: noise, noise, from twelve, midday, till long after twelve midnight.

Terence Desmond grumbled that "pussyfoot" had ruined him, but lack of liquor—if there was a lack—did not seem to interfere with business at the Road House. There were crowds for luncheon—crowds of white-faced, pink-cheeked girls, like big dolls, and their escorts, often old men, or very young ones with foolish faces.

In the afternoon more motorists would drive up, demanding lemonade or tea, and they would sit smoking while the band played, as it never failed to play at all hours of the day or night. Crowds again for the celebrated fish dinner; and greater crowds for the supper dance. The jazz music startled Terry when she first heard it and irritated her nerves. She thought it like some tragedy among pots and kettles in the kitchen. Even when she was permitted to go to bed she could never sleep till the small hours, and hers was not the placid temperament which can make up for lack of rest, with a late morning nap. Her health suffered and the little sleep she got was broken with hateful dreams; dreams of men's faces, especially their eyes.

There were eyes that stared in the restaurant, eyes that she avoided by bending over her work, but could feel through the top of her head, sharp as gimlets: they

came through the wall of her room in dreams, and the horror was that they drew nearer and nearer to her own face until she struggled awake with a gasp. In the dreams she felt that, if they touched her, she would die. But when she lay awake in the morning thinking of those dreams, they seemed stupid. She could not understand or define her dislike of the look in some men's eyes, more than in others. It was only a silly, dead-fish sort of look, she told herself, but the odd thing was that, in the dreams, the girl seemed to know something bad, even dangerous about it, which became nonsense when she was awake.

Most of the people who ate and danced at the Blue Moon appeared to be rather common and unintelligent according to convent-learned standards, judged from the conversations she overheard, and the skylarking that went on among the livelier clients. But one evening the girl looked up (she seemed somehow compelled to look up) and met a pair of eyes from a different world. A queer little stab shot through her nerves. She did not like the eyes. But they were not common. It occurred to her that they were magnetic as the eyes of a black cat. And they were much the same colour; a greyish, greenish yellow.

Though she looked down as quickly as she had looked up, the girl saw the eyes between her and her paper, as one sees bright spots after gazing at the sun. The table at which the man had sat down to dine was so close to her desk that the nearness of the eyes was an unpleasant reminder of the dream, and she kept an impression of their colour with startling clearness. There was, however, one consolation in knowing them so near—they had not that foolish, dying-fish look. These eyes were alert, and bright with intelligence of a sort.

The man sat facing the girl at her desk, and she resolved not to look at him again, but the attraction or repulsion (whichever it was) overcame her, and once more she met the eyes. This time hers photographed the face more distinctly than ever: a repellent face, perhaps, yet one that she would have been drawn to study if she could have studied it unseen.

It was, Terry found, wonderfully intellectual for a Blue Moon client. The forehead was high, if narrow, framed in thick black hair streaked with grey. The brilliant eyes were deep-set, under heavy brows. The nose was strong and big, the cheek bones prominent: one would have said, a writer or speaker on strong subjects strongly felt, though the lower part of the face destroyed that impression, it was difficult to say why. The heavy jowl and protruding jaw were covered with a greying black beard, but the lips showed thick and red.

Down dropped Terry's long lashes, and she tried to forget the man. But she could not put him out of her mind. Why should an intelligent person amuse himself by staring her out of countenance, as the silly people did?

By and by, without raising her eyes, the girl became conscious that her *vis-à-vis* had risen and walked away. Then, a few minutes later, her father spoke. "Meet my daughter—my little namesake, Teresa—Mr. Nazlo," he said; and added, "Mr. Nazlo has paid our place some nice compliments. This is the first time he's been here. He dropped in by accident, but he says he means to come back. I hope he will. He's a big man, as fine an American as a Greek, and we're proud to welcome him."

Nazlo laughed. It was early, and few of the tables

were occupied. He could stand and talk to the cashier at her desk without being remarked.

"Thank you," he said in a deep voice. "I hope you'll welcome me, too, Miss Desmond. And I hope I didn't annoy you, seeming to stare. I didn't mean to be rude. But—I suppose other people have remarked how like you are to—a well-known young lady, Juliet Divine? I wonder if you ever saw her?"

Terry met a warning gleam in her father's eyes. He answered, to give her a cue. "Miss Divine has been here once or twice, but that was before my daughter finished school. Teresa's been working to help her old dad only three months. Somebody told me that Miss Divine's in Europe—or South America, maybe—so Teresa won't get a chance yet to judge the resemblance."

"Miss Divine must have come back. I saw her walking down Fifth Avenue a couple of days ago," said Nazlo. "I don't know her personally," he went on, perhaps to Desmond's relief, "but we all admire her. She's mighty pretty. But—if you'll let me say so"—he bowed to Terry—"*you* could give her points. You're years younger, too."

"My daughter's seventeen," said Terence. "Just seventeen, and just out of a convent!"

Terry felt unpleasantly that her father was showing her off. Nazlo's eyes sent out a flash.

"A convent maiden!" he echoed. "Why, we oughtn't to speak of her in the same breath with the Million Dollar Doll, ought we, Mr. Desmond?"

Terry spoke for the first time. "What's a million dollar doll?" she asked, turning to her father with a faint impulse of anger; because it was Julia to whom the man gave what sounded like an impertinent nickname.

Nazlo laughed. "Let *me* answer, Mr. Desmond, with another question! Did they teach you mythology—ancient legends of my native land—Greece—at your convent?"

"No, they didn't," the girl said. "But there was a child's mythology book, with lots of pictures, in the school library. I read it."

"Ah! Do you remember Danäe?"

"Ye-es," Terry hesitated. "There was a picture of her in a shower of gold sent by Jupiter."

"Go up top of the class! Well, a million dollar doll's a Danäe of to-day, who wouldn't be at home to Jupiter or any other god *unless* he brought a shower of gold—and some perfectly good pearls, diamonds and sables thrown in. Now do you understand?"

"I'm afraid I don't," said Terry, shortly. She felt hurt and bewildered, but Father made no open attempt to defend Julia. His ears were red, as always when he was angry, but Mr. Nazlo couldn't know that. Besides, Nazlo was looking at her.

"Just as well you don't understand," he smiled. "It's refreshing to meet innocence, these days. Mr. Desmond, your daughter ought to see something of the world, don't you think? Seems to me you're wrong to keep her cooped up here, when she might be enjoying life. She'll be young only once."

Terry expected her father to hint that his daughter was his own business, but he accepted the advice in the jovial manner in which it was offered. "I wanted the girl to learn business, and prove the stuff she was made of," he explained. "I don't mean to keep her nose to the grindstone very long."

As a matter of fact, Desmond was furious with Nazlo. If he could have obeyed his impulse, he would have

thrown the man out of the restaurant for his sneering description of Julia. But he—Desmond—was supposed to have no special interest in Miss Divine. He had even pretended not to know that she had come back from Europe, and it vexed him that Terry should hear the news. Now that this startling likeness had developed, it was not wise for Julia to show herself at the Blue Moon. She loved her father, but she had risen high in her own world, and cared less than ever to be identified as a roadside innkeeper's daughter. She had invented a legend of her own origin, and wished to stick to it. As for Terence, he had thrown over his "old-fashioned prejudices" in the days of Tom Perrin, to whom he owed his change of luck. Perhaps most of those prejudices had dissolved, like Cleopatra's pearl, in wine. At all events they were gone; and whatever Jule did was right.

Terence had made further concessions to life, in the grand manner. For instance, in the case of millionaires like Nazlo, you kept your temper, up to the limit and down the other side. Such magnates could buy and sell you a hundred times over. If you were stiff-backed you showed yourself a fool. You never knew what these fellows might do for you, if you flattered them. Besides, there was this girl Teresa to get off your hands.

Terence hadn't made his daughter cashier because he needed her help in the restaurant. He could easily have engaged a young woman, already trained, for the job. He had put Terry where she was in order that she might be seen. Almost reluctantly he admitted to himself (it seemed a disloyalty) that the girl was as pretty as Jule. Besides, she was ten years younger. He thought that some rich chap was sure to take a fancy to the little cashier, and might even marry her.

But he'd never expected to land such a big fish as Eustace Nazlo, the Shoe King. Nazlo was a very different type from the other men, young, middle-aged, or old, who had been "caught" since her home-coming by Terry's red hair, and the big eyes that looked black, but were hazel or violet. Those chaps had been "Johnnies"—common or garden Johnnies; and he could hardly have forced a "convent kid" to "cotton" to any of them, even had their intentions been serious, which so far, apparently, was not the case. But Nazlo was a man of brains, a Napoleon of business, who had started with nothing, and before the war was on his way to becoming a millionaire. During the war he had reached the million mark. Everybody knew his name. His Rolls-Royce was in the garage at this minute, making every other car "look like thirty cents." Even Terry might have heard of him. But, it seemed, she hadn't. Instead of annoying Nazlo, however, the girl's ignorance amused and pleased him. It proved, as well as anything could, that the "story of her life" wasn't a fairy tale. No girl of her class, except a convent girl, would treat him with such indifference.

"My advice is, get another cashier immediately if not sooner," said Nazlo, "and release this young lady from prison. Do you like motoring, Miss Desmond? If you do, you might enjoy a spin in my Rolls-Royce."

Terry blushed. She had not changed much at heart since the days at Silverwood when she played the game of "let's pretend." "I've never been in an automobile," her thought spoke itself.

"What! I didn't suppose there was such an innocent left!" Nazlo laughed. "But then I've never before come across a girl just out of a convent. You're a new experience, Miss Desmond. That means a good deal

to a blasé fellow like me! Do you understand the word —'blasé'?"

"Yes. I learned French at the convent," Terry said.

Nazlo beamed. Like most Greeks, he was a natural linguist, and it was pleasant to show off an accomplishment before a pretty girl who could appreciate it. He burst into fluent French, and Terry shyly answered in the same language. The nun who taught French in the convent was a Parisienne.

The girl's shyness came not from fear of Nazlo as a man, but from distrust of herself, lest she should make some mistake and be shamed in the eyes of a person so clever, so old. It had always struck her as strange since she came back to the Blue Moon that so many elderly men seemed to take an interest in young girls. Such whispered gossip as she had had in the convent with other girls about "being in love" concerned itself with young men—"boys." It hadn't yet occurred to her that the ageing men who brought pretty little painted things to the inn could be "in love" with them. They must put themselves to the trouble of escorting these young persons and paying for their meals, because they were their uncles, or friends of the family.

It was true, those faded old eyes could goggle at you in the same silly, fish-like way that boys' eyes had. Still, the poor old men couldn't, simply *couldn't* be in love!

This Mr. Nazlo wasn't exactly old, but he was elderly. It was interesting to speak French with him, and Terry would have liked the man if there hadn't been that funny flash in his eyes which gave her a little stab. In spite of the flash, however, she wanted to go in his automobile. She almost prayed that her father would say yes.

"Well, what about it, Mr. Desmond?" the Shoe King asked, dropping back into English. "Will you trust me to take your daughter for a blow?"

"Mighty nice of you to trouble over a little girl like her," Terence answered jauntily. "And I'd like to give her the pleasure. I'm afraid, though, I can't spare her this evening. We're slack just now. But people are beginning to come in, and there's always a crowd later on."

The heat of his anger had died down; and his hopes had begun to rise, but he was "too sharp" to show excitement. Desmond knew it would be bad policy to throw his daughter at Nazlo's head.

"When did you say you meant to give your cashier a holiday?" the Greek smilingly persisted.

"I didn't mention any time, but as a matter of fact I was thinking of letting her off next week, and getting a regular cashier."

"Can't you give her an hour or so off now and then, before that?" Nazlo was almost pleading.

"Very much afraid I couldn't, sir," replied Terence gravely. But he chuckled within. The affair was going like smoke!

VIII

TERRY was wildly excited the day when she was to know the joy of motoring. She had dreamed of it and "played" that she was having it so often! It seemed too good to be true that it was going to happen.

There was a new cashier in the restaurant since this morning, and at five o'clock Mr. Nazlo would come for her. She felt almost happy for the first time since her mother's death. She couldn't help being just a *little* happy!

It was ten minutes to five; time to run downstairs, in case Mr. Nazlo should be early. But the girl paused an instant before the tiny mirror that hung above her dressing-table. She was in mourning, but to her surprise, Father had brought her a present from Oldport; a grey silk motor coat, and a toque to match. Suddenly a picture of long ago painted itself in her brain: Jule, in a wonderful grey silk motor coat and veiled toque, sitting in the drawing-room at Silverwood. Why, *she* was nearly as old now as Jule had been then! A pang of homesickness shot through her heart, a great longing for Julia's love. It seemed as if the Princess had forgotten her these days!

She ran downstairs, and into the restaurant, empty save for five or six couples. Desmond, who was instructing the new cashier, strolled over to Terry, at once escorting her to the door.

"Nazlo'll be here any minute," he said. "Glad you won't keep him waiting. He's not the kind for that game. Hm! You're sort of easy to look at in that

hat! Thought 'twould suit you. You can keep your end up, I guess, with any of the peaches Nazlo knows, even the high Society females he's in with since the war. But see here, my girl, I'll give you the straight tip:—Mind your p's and q's with this fine gentleman."

"What do you mean, Dad?" Terry questioned him, surprised; because Mr. Nazlo was Father's contemporary if not his friend.

"Don't you understand plain English, as well as the French language? Anyhow, haven't you got a woman's instinct?"

"I don't know," stumbled the girl, ashamed of her denseness. "I'll behave politely, if that's what you mean."

"I mean a little more," Terence caught her up. "Don't make yourself cheap. Let him squeeze your hand, but no kissing—see? Not unless he's popped the question, and I hardly think he'll get to that in the first round, if ever. Still, he *might*. It's up to you, I guess."

Terry stared. She was not a slow-witted girl, but the thought that Eustace Nazlo might propose to marry her was so strange that she couldn't take it in. All she knew at the moment was that the pleasure of her excursion was spoiled. She had an impulse to turn, run to her room, lock herself in, throw off the motor coat and hat and stamp on them. But at that moment the Rolls-Royce drew up before the door: Nazlo waved a hand and sprang out of the limousine.

It was too late for Terry to escape. There would be too awful a row with Father afterwards. Besides, what Father had said wasn't Mr. Nazlo's fault.

"You shall have your daughter back by ten or eleven o'clock—good little girls' bedtime," the Shoe King con-

descended to the roadside-innkeeper, as he motioned the chauffeur away and tenderly tucked a light dust-rug round Terry's knees. "Just an early dinner somewhere—then home. That's the programme for a convent-maid; what?"

"Yes, that's the programme," Desmond echoed.

The car began to glide smoothly away. He watched it, scratched his chin, then slowly turned and went into the house, whistling under his breath.

"Where would you like to have dinner?" Nazlo asked.

Terry tried not to be self-conscious; tried to forget her father's hints. But she could not meet the deep-set, yellow-grey eyes, which had a devouring light in them, like a flame. If she did meet them, they would hold hers, she feared. Nervously she looked out of the window, and said that she knew nothing about places where people dined.

Nazlo described two or three on Long Island, resorts which might be suitable. "If it was late September instead of late August, I'd suggest somewhere in New York," he said, "but it's hot in the city."

Instantly the girl forgot her troubles. "Oh," she exclaimed, gazing up like a child, "*would* you take me to New York? I've never been there."

In his amazement Nazlo ceased the hypnotic eye-work which was his specialty. "Never been to New York?" he echoed. "That's a joke, isn't it?"

"No, indeed it isn't," Terry confessed. "Truly, I've never been. I've lived always on Long Island, at home and at the convent. I'd give anything to see New York."

Thoughts flashed through her head. Perhaps she could persuade Mr. Nazlo to take her up Riverside

Drive. Then she could pass the house where Julia lived.

"You'd give 'anything,' would you?" he echoed in a petting tone, as if she were a little girl. "That's a generous offer! Might be dangerous with some men" —he saw her face change—"but not with me. Of course you shall 'see New York.' What I want is to please you, fair Daphne."

"Why do you call me 'Daphne'?" she ventured.

"I thought you were so well up in Greek mythology!"

"Oh! Daphne was a nymph. She turned into a tree."

"Go up head again! A god tried to make love to her, so she turned into a tree to protect herself. I believe that's what *you'd* try to do in her place. You've got—that nymph air. But a wise god would hypnotise you to fall in love with him. It would be a shame for a pretty girl like you to turn into a tree."

Again the magnetic look! Terry avoided it. Something within her advised that she'd better think of an excuse and ask to go home; a headache—anything. But the temptation to see New York and Julia's home was too strong. Besides, Mr. Nazlo was only talking about mythology! He was interested in it because he was Greek.

"I don't want to turn into a tree," she said, blushing. "Would we have time to go up Riverside Drive before dinner?"

"We've got all the time there is," Nazlo replied. "Why do you want to see Riverside Drive? Have you friends living there?"

"I—I've heard about the Grant Monument," Terry saved herself.

Nazlo laughed. "What a little school-child it is! Interested in history! Well, I'll be good. Instead of playing Apollo to your Daphne and beating him at his game—which I bet I could do!—I'll personally conduct a private tour of 'Seeing New York.' That is, I will, if you'll let me arrange every detail on the programme for the rest of the evening. Will you?"

"I—think so," agreed Terry.

Nazlo seemed satisfied, and made himself charming, or so it seemed to the girl. He told her things about the road, and pointed out objects of interest in the landscape. Her surprise at the great bridge, and at the towering skyscrapers of New York which turned streets into mountain canyons, enchanted him. He had met a number of young women who behaved like children, but never a girl of seventeen who was at heart a child. Her beauty, her refinement of manner, and her ignorance of life made a rare combination almost too good to be true. Yet it *was* true. And Nazlo found it intoxicating. He'd meant to keep his head through this evening, but as he watched his companion, so shy, yet so trusting, he wasn't quite sure he could do it.

At Terry's request, the car slowed down along Riverside Drive. She gazed out of the window, bending forward. Every one of the big, handsome houses fascinated her. Now and then she asked questions. The back of the girl's head was exquisite: the bright copper-red hair pressed down by the simple toque; the three or four shining, childish ringlets that had twisted themselves out of the mass just at the nape of the white neck. Nazlo resisted temptation until after the Grant Monument had been inspected, and the car had nearly traversed the length of Riverside Drive on the return journey. Then, when the girl bade him look at some

house which struck her fancy, and he leaned towards her, the impulse tingled to an electric shock. He belted the girl's waist with an arm, drew her close and kissed her on what—as a student of French—he called the "nuque."

Terry wriggled herself free in an instant, sprang up, and was thrown onto the seat again by the motion of the car. She fell against Nazlo's shoulder and he steadied her, but did not attempt to repeat his experiment.

"Don't look so cross, little girl," he said. "I didn't mean any harm. You're only a child. You shouldn't have such a pretty back of a neck, if you don't want it kissed!" and he laughed pleasantly.

"Please take me home," Terry whispered. "I—don't want to go anywhere to dinner."

"Now—now, we mustn't be silly!" the Shoe King gently scolded. "I've said I was sorry. Isn't that enough? I tell you I'm on the square. If your father didn't know that, he wouldn't let me take you out. These days girls don't mind a kiss or two, I swear they don't. You've been brought up in an old-fashioned way. But now I understand you better, it'll be all right—you'll see. I'm going to show you the nicest place in New York to dine. We'll have a beautiful little room all to ourselves, and you shall choose just what you want to eat. Say you forgive me!"

He took her hand, but, notwithstanding her father's advice, Terry snatched it away from him.

"I hate being touched!" she said.

Her heart was pounding, her ears burning. She feared the man. Precisely what he could do to hurt her she did not know, but the sight of him so near made her sick. How angry Mother would be! Tears stung

the girl's eyelids, but she would not let them fall. What ought she to do?

It was clear that Nazlo would not take her home. She could not force him. If she leaned through the window and called the chauffeur, he'd obey Nazlo, not her. If she tried to spring out of the car, she would fall, and perhaps be killed. Yet she must make up her mind to some plan. There was just one thing certain: she would *not* dine with this man in the "beautiful little room all to themselves" which he described.

Suddenly an inspiration came. The girl almost laughed with the relief and excitement of it.

IX

"WELL, do you forgive me?" Nazlo repeated.

"If you'll let me alone," Terry said.

The Greek had been disconcerted for a moment. He had thought that the silly little chicken meant to make a scene, so now he accepted her concession thankfully. Anxious to win her back again, he began to talk of impersonal things: theatres and roof gardens that she must go to some night in future. And as he spoke, Nazlo mentally set the stage for the next act. He'd give the child sweet champagne; she wouldn't like it dry, at first taste. "The nicest place in New York" owed some of its niceness to ingenuity in circumventing prohibition rules. Yes—sweet champagne, well iced. He could see her sipping it. . . .

They arrived at their destination. The chauffeur, long ago warned through the speaking tube, turned into a quiet side street and drew up in front of a door with clipped, dwarf box trees for sentinels. There was an instant when Nazlo watched the girl alertly, lest she meant to give him the slip: but he took her arm with a show of firmness, and she walked demurely into the entrance hall.

"Is there a room where I could wash my face, and make my hair tidy?" she asked. Her eyes were wide and innocent. She flushed delicately as Nazlo tried to read her look. He was sure, at last, that she had recovered from the "flutters," and had settled down into a tractable mood.

While she was shown up a short stairway to the

ladies' cloak room, Nazlo occupied himself in engaging a private dining-room for two, and ordering such a dinner as he thought would delight a convent-child, new to New York. Fortunately, at that season of the year, the popular restaurant was not crowded. There were several rooms to choose from, and Nazlo selected one with decorations to suit Terry Desmond's colouring. It was all white and gold, with a few purple cushions. The Greek thought that the girl with the red hair and the simple black dress would be a dazzling beauty in that setting. When he had asked for yellow roses to be placed on the small round table, Nazlo went out to intercept Terry as she came downstairs.

He had been so anxious to finish in time to meet her that hardly ten minutes had passed, and he waited patiently for eight or ten more. But surely a girl like Teresa Desmond, innocent of paint and powder, wouldn't need half an hour to banish the little dust picked up in a limousine!

Five minutes more he grudgingly gave. Then he sent a message to the cloak room. A young lady with red hair and dark eyes, dressed in mourning, was to be reminded that Mr. Nazlo was waiting and hoped she was all right.

The boy who ran up to tell the cloak room attendant returned almost at once. The attendant said that no such young lady had come into the cloak room that evening: and there wasn't any one there now.

For an instant Nazlo was dumb with rage, rage at himself for his idiotic trustfulness, rage at the girl for the cunning that had deceived him. And under the rage was sharp disappointment. His heart felt hot and heavy, as it had not felt since he was young.

Then vanity rushed to the rescue. He knew that his

face had reddened, for his forehead was damp. Eyes were fixed upon him in curiosity, and, hating his humiliation, he laughed. "The little lady wants to play tag with me!" he said good-naturedly. "I suppose I must go catch her and fetch her back before she's tired of the game."

He went to the man at the door and described Terry. "Perhaps you remember the girl who arrived with me half an hour ago," he added.

The man did remember. Yes, he'd noticed the young lady go out alone, not more than five minutes after she came in. She had a letter in her hand. He had asked if she would like it posted, but she'd said, "No, thank you," she preferred to go herself.

"Did you see whether she took a taxi?" Nazlo enquired, controlling his voice.

The man hadn't seen what the young lady did after she went through the revolving door. Others had come in about that time. He'd forgotten to watch for her return.

Nazlo's blood pounded in his head, and he had difficulty in concentrating. But he was a man trained to master emotion except at times when he could afford the pleasure of letting it master him. He forced himself to face the question: "What would the girl be likely to do?"

There was one thing certain. She wouldn't have run away if she'd meant to come back. And it seemed almost equally certain that, as this was her first visit to New York, she wouldn't go wandering about the streets. It seemed as if her one thought would be to get home. Probably she hadn't much money. No doubt, however, she would have enough for a ride in the subway, and the journey to Oldport by train. Like

a fool he'd told her among other things how easy it was to travel to New York from Long Island and back! Yes, she would run for home. That must be what had happened.

. . . . . .

But it had not happened.

Terry had made use of a convent letter which she had in her pocket in order to escape without rousing the door porter's suspicion.

She had no money at all. Nevertheless, while Nazlo was studying a time-table, in order to head her off at the Pennsylvania station if it could be done, the girl was in a taxi.

She had not dared to get into one in front of the restaurant, lest she might be seen, and traced. But having hurried round the corner, and walked very fast for a block and a half, she noticed a number of vehicles in front of an hotel. The girl had seen many couples arrive at the Blue Moon in such conveyances, and knew that they were not private cars.

"Take me to the Ardlamont, on Riverside Drive," she said, half afraid—in her ignorance—that she might be asked to pay in advance. If she had been, she planned to say, "My sister lives there. She will give me the money." But it was a relief that the man seemed to trust her. If Julia were not at home, maybe there'd be a servant, from whom she could borrow. But, no, it was too bad to be true that Jule should be away! She hoped desperately that it might not be so. There was not only the difficulty about paying! She did not know what would become of her for that night unless she found Julia—or indeed for the nights to come, for she felt that she could never go back to live with her father.

The drive seemed much longer than before, because the girl feared each moment to see Nazlo's great grey limousine. He had asked her why she was interested in Riverside Drive. He might come now to suspect from her questions and from the likeness to Julia that they were related.

Even when the taxi stopped, and the lighted, pale brick bulk of the Ardlamont loomed above her, the girl peeped anxiously out of the window before she ventured to descend. But there was no automobile in sight resembling Nazlo's. The only one in front of the building was a dark coloured car of much the same build, which looked black in the summer dusk.

"Will you please wait a few minutes, and I'll bring you down the money, or send it," said Terry. The chauffeur made no objection to this proposal, and she was relieved. Yet her voice trembled as she asked a negro in livery, inside the door, if he knew whether Miss Divine was at home?

"No, I don't know, Miss," replied the man, staring, no doubt because of the resemblance. "I ain't seen her go out, and her auto ain't been around. But you better take the elevator up to her floor. It's the tenth."

As he spoke, the smart-looking attendant motioned towards a pair of sliding oak doors which at that instant flew apart, showing a tiny room, with an electric light and red velvet seats round the wall. In it stood an old negro in the same dark-green livery as the first.

"Going up, Miss?" he asked.

Terry had never seen an elevator, but she walked into the little room and was shot up and up with appalling speed. The attendant was able to inform her that Miss Divine was in. He had taken a gentleman to call on her about fifteen minutes ago.

At the tenth floor the black man pointed out a door at the left of a marble-paved corridor, and Terry touched an electric bell. But her hands were cold despite the humid warmth of the night. Could the gentleman with Julia possibly be Mr. Nazlo?

She was kept waiting a few moments, and was just about to touch the bell again when the door opened. A tall, fine-looking mulatto woman in a black satin dress, a little lace cap and apron, and high-heeled shoes, gazed wide-eyed at the red-haired girl in mourning. Her expression showed astonishment.

"Is Miss Divine in? Oh, I *hope* she is!" Terry almost gasped. "She—she's my sister."

"My goodness! You sure did give me a start, Miss!" exclaimed the maid. "Ye-es'm, she's in. I reckon if you're her sister she'll maybe see you. But I ain't sure. She wasn't expectin' you, was she?"

"No," Terry admitted. "I didn't know I was coming. I live in the country, a long way off. Oh, but I'm *sure* she'll see me! Do let me come in."

"Well, she told me she wouldn't be home to any one, no matter *who,* while that gentleman was here. They've got important business. That's what she said. But if you want to wait in the hall till I find out—or, no, maybe you'd better sit in the dining-room."

The woman stood aside, half reluctantly, and let the girl—"the picture of Miss Divine"—cross the threshold.

It seemed to Terry that Julia's description of her apartment had fallen short of the reality. The square hall, from which several doors opened, had white walls with painted pictures set in panels. The doors were made of mirrors, with many small, square panes. On the polished floor was a rug of lovely pale tints, and immense vases held long-stemmed roses. The dining-

room was white too, but it was panelled with rose-coloured brocade framed in narrow lines of gold, and there was a crimson carpet so thick it felt like moss to the girl's feet. The chairs drawn round the table had carved backs and arms. There was gilding about them, too. Terry thought it was like an apartment in the palace of a king, but she felt, dimly, that she would choose simpler things for herself.

The maid, who was of Indian type rather than negroid in appearance, was paid high wages for tact and intelligence—often needed. She had quickly decided upon the dining-room instead of the hall, for the visitor to wait. The door of Miss Divine's "den," where she had received her caller, opened into the hall. There, the girl would be within earshot, perhaps might even catch a glimpse of Miss Divine, and try to "rush" her if she heard a refusal. Shut up in the dining-room she could do no mischief.

The mulatto woman tapped discreetly at the door of the room named by Miss Divine her "den." "Come in!" cried the sweet, husky voice which was one of Julia's charms. The maid obeyed only so far as to open the door half-way. "Would you kindly step into the hall a second, Madam?" she suggested. (Miss Divine was always called "Madam" by her servants.)

Julia was surprised, but she trusted Emmeline's tact and flew out, in a diaphanous rest-gown, softly closing the door behind her. "What is it? Señor Fernandez hasn't come?" she asked anxiously, under her breath.

"No, Madam, it ain't as bad as that," Emmeline replied, with an odd mingling of affection and impertinence in her tone.. "There's a young lady. She says she's your sister but you didn't expect her, so I wasn't sure if I ought to let her in. But she's the image of

you. I thought she couldn't be a fraud. So I put her in the dining-room."

"My goodness *gracious!*" Julia gasped. "It must be Terry."

"She didn't say her name. You never told me you had a sister, Madam."

"It wasn't worth while. Is she alone?"

"Yes, Madam."

"How did she come, I wonder?"

"She arrived in a taxi. She wants to borrow money to settle with the chauffeur and send him away. I would have arranged with Joe, in the elevator, to pay whatever it was. But I thought, if you didn't want her to stay—"

"Oh, I suppose she'll have to stay. I must manage somehow. Give Joe the money. Did she seem upset about anything?"

"No, Madam, she was real quiet, but begged awful hard to see you."

"Well, she can't see me yet," Julia decided. "Mr. Phillips won't stop long. If the child seems all right she can wait till we finish talking. And it's better they shouldn't meet. Gee! It's rather complicated to have a sister!"

"It must be, Madam," agreed Emmeline.

"Ask her if she wants anything to eat," Julia flung over her shoulder, as she opened the door again and, slipping through, closed it quickly. In the "den," she flung herself down once more on a huge divan, crossed her feet, admired them, helped herself to a cigarette from a gold box on a low table, struck a match, and said—"Well? I'm half dead with curiosity to know why the great Mr. Hartley Phillips has honoured poor little me with a call for the first time in his life. Isn't it about time we came to the point?"

X

AS she spoke, Julia produced a perfect smoke ring, so large that, as it floated away from her lips, it made a vanishing frame for her bright hair and brilliant face.

The man who sat in an easy chair at some distance from the divan smiled at the picture. But there are smiles and smiles. Juliet Divine knew all kinds of smiles on men's faces; how much they meant, or how little. This smile meant cool, slightly contemptuous appreciation of a physically admirable woman.

"It isn't my fault that we've been some time working up to the point," he said. "You were kind enough to insist on my having a cocktail—and I'd heard you were famous for your cocktails—among other things. In fact, I've called on you this evening *because* you're famous."

"Thank you!" Julia nodded to him with gaiety, real or affected. He was a good-looking man, not more than forty years old, and was high up in what she would have called the "Four Hundred"—a phrase never forgotten by outsiders. But you could see by the thin features, narrowing eyes, and the skin which shaded into the same grey as the hair at his temples, that the man was cold as a December frost. Julia was not inclined to help him. She guessed that Mr. Hartley Phillips was not quite at ease, and when she had almost forced a cocktail and later a cigarette upon him, he had tried to excuse himself by saying he hadn't long to stay. But it pleased her that somehow she had disconcerted such

a man. She didn't like to think that a male type existed over which she had *no* power!

"When I 'phoned and enquired if you'd be at home, I said I wanted to ask a favour," Phillips began.

"Yes, you did," Julia shortly admitted. "I couldn't think what sort of favour *you* might want from me."

"And you'd never be likely to work out the puzzle. But it's—er—a little difficult to explain at the opening—sounds rather bald."

Julia laughed a hard laugh. "I'm used to bald men!"

Phillips took no notice of this sally, though it did not pass over his head. In fact, it was aimed at the top of it. "I shan't ask the favour for nothing," he went on. "And it isn't for me, personally. It's for a friend. I don't know if you've heard of him: Mr. Sheridan—Miles Sheridan."

"Oh!" breathed Julia. She sat up straighter among her cushions. But she had spent enough time on the stage to call herself an actress, and she didn't show her slighter emotions unless she chose. Her thoughts travelled back upon a road seven years long. She had heard all about the adventure of the broken-down motor car and the "Prince's" generosity to "Cinderella." Also she had often seen Mrs. Miles Sheridan's name in the Society columns since the wedding before the war. She had been interested because of the link with old Mrs. Parmalee and Silverwood. But "Oh!" was the only word she spoke.

"Sheridan and his wife haven't hit it off very well together," Phillips continued. "I'd like to tell you a few things in that connection, Miss Divine, if I can do so in strict confidence. I must say I've always heard you spoken of as a—a thoroughly good sport, a person with whom one could be—er—safe. By giving up a

few weeks of your valuable time to—a scheme I want to propose for my friend, you would earn—become possessed of—a large sum of money."

Julia smiled faintly. She had the secret pleasure of knowing that she would very soon "become possessed," as this man put it, in his floundering attempt to save her feelings, of so very large a sum that never need she trouble about earning another dollar. She meant to spring this fact upon Hartley Phillips by and by, but —even though poor little Terry awaited her—she was enjoying the situation too much to end it quite yet. "How large a sum?" she asked lazily.

"What do you call large?" Phillips hedged.

"A hundred thousand dollars isn't—to be sneezed at."

"Good Heavens! I should think not!" The man stiffened. "I'm not talking in any such figures as that, my dear pretty lady. Ten thousand dollars, or"—seeing the beautiful face harden—"possibly twice that sum —would be the limit."

"And what am I to do for you, or your friend, for twenty thousand dollars?" Julia coolly wanted to know.

Phillips hesitated. "The money's absolutely yours for the taking," he prefaced. Then added sharply, "*Will* you treat what I say as strictly confidential?"

"I will," promised Julia, her intense curiosity triumphing over the temptation to snub the "grand gentleman."

"Very well, then, I'll trust you. My great friend Miles Sheridan—whom I've known since I was a big boy and he was a little one—is in heavy trouble. He's the best fellow in the world, and his wife ought to be devoted to him. But she's been spoiled—had too much of her own way all her life, and since her marriage she's lost her head."

"Deceived her hubby?" Julia drawled. It pleased her to hear of women in a world apart from hers, who "went wrong," "kicked over the traces."

"Well, yes. I'm afraid she has."

"Was it that Italian, Prince di Salvano, who came over on some military mission after he got wounded in the war, and liked America so much he's been playing around ever since?"

Hartley Phillips dared not order the impertinent minx to mind her own business. "I daresay you've heard some gossip," he admitted. "But Mrs. Sheridan's conduct is neither here nor there—between us. It's Sheridan I came to talk about. He—"

"I've happened to meet the Prince, that's all," Julia broke in, looking reminiscent. "Awfully handsome fellow. Rather fascinating. I don't much blame Mrs. Sheridan."

"Sheridan is handsome and fascinating too, in his different way." Phillips hurried on.

"Ah, but a *husband!*"

"Yes"—drily. "That *was* against him. Anyhow, he doesn't want his wife talked about more than she has been, if he can help it. Her grandmother, Mrs. Parmalee, who brought her up, was good to him when he was a boy and he promised the old lady on her deathbed, I believe, that he'd always stand between the girl and trouble. What he wants is, to give Mrs. Sheridan cause to get a divorce from him."

"I begin to see light!" said Julia. "The big idea is for me to flirt with him. Well, that might have appealed to me once, but it doesn't now. I have my own reasons. I'm not taking any, thanks!"

"You don't understand what I mean yet," Phillips

argued with flattering eagerness. "I'll tell you exactly what I do mean, without beating round the bush. Sheridan has a steam yacht. She's named after the old place where he used to stay as a boy—Mrs. Parmalee's place—'Silverwood.' He bought her to please his wife who thought she'd fancy yachting, but she hates it like poison. All the same Silverwood's a fine craft, warranted not to make the worst sailor seasick. If you'll take a trip with Miles Sheridan, stopping at several well-known ports *en route,* where there'll be plenty of people who know you both by sight, not only will you be paid twenty thousand dollars, half in advance if you like, but you'll be safe from—from what you called 'flirtation.' Mr. Sheridan wants to have every one talk about the trip, and he wants to be seen about with you. But apart from appearances, he won't have anything to do with you, Miss Divine. Frankly, the less he sees of you the better."

"Oh, indeed!" Julia said. She had enhanced her complexion a little—a very little—with powder and rouge for the last four or five years, but she flushed so hotly at Mr. Phillips' "frankness" that her natural colour burned through the false roses. "Oh, indeed! Mr. Miles Sheridan pays me a beautiful compliment! I wonder you had the cheek to come and make such a proposition! And I *don't* wonder he didn't care to come himself!"

"Sheridan has never seen you. If he had, he could hardly have been so cold-blooded." Phillips' tone changed. "We were discussing his troubles, he and I, talking over pros and cons, ways and means—that sort of thing. And it was I who thought of you. I proposed the plan—"

"I'd like to have heard you doing it!" sneered Julia, strong in the position of which she alone knew, and independent of any man's favour.

"I don't mind telling you how I did it," said Phillips. "I told Sheridan you were the prettiest and the best known person in—er—in your own set. I said that you'd been on the stage as a Show Girl, and that even now you acted once in a while, if you felt like accepting some offer. I mentioned your—er—pet name, which seemed to tickle his fancy, rather: the 'Million Dollar Doll,' and explained to him that it was—expressive. I said what I've said to you, too—that you're a 'good sport.' And I told him he couldn't do better than invite you on board 'Silverwood,' if he wants to be thoroughly compromised, so his wife can divorce him without any bother. Of course, if you don't *want* him to keep away from you on board—"

"Oh, I'd want him to, all right, if I were going. But I'm not," Julia said.

"Won't you at least think it over?" Phillips urged.

It was on Julia's tongue to say, "No, I won't. You must get some one else." But a door shut with a sharp slam somewhere in the house. She remembered the little sister waiting anxiously in another room. What if—well, it wasn't likely. But twenty thousand dollars was worth having—if it could be had.

"Well—perhaps—yes, I'll think it over," she agreed. "Though it's not much use. I don't feel one bit inclined to accept. Still . . . you're absolutely *sure* Miles Sheridan would let me keep to myself?—that he wouldn't change his mind or—be troublesome? I must be *certain* that's regularly in the bargain before I even *think*. Because—I tell you this in the same confidence that you've been talking to me. I'm going to give up

New York, and the white lights. I met a man when I was travelling in South America—a peach of a man: a big millionaire. Handsome too. He knew my—friend I travelled with, and made me promise to throw him over. We're engaged to be married now. It's me for the quiet domestic life, with plenty of diamonds and pearls, a grand house in Buenos Aires, and good society—*real* society, see?—thrown in! But we shan't have the wedding right off. *He's* in New York now, but he's got to run over to Spain before he goes back home, and I'm dead sick of Europe. I was in Paris and London and Madrid last year. So I'll have a little rest cure after he sails. He's starting in about two weeks. He may be away as long as three months. And it's just on the cards that I—but I don't think—"

"*Do* think!" Phillips cut in.

"Would you care to run up again to-morrow morning, after breakfast—say, about eleven? I'm generally more or less visible then," suggested Julia. "By that time, I might give you a definite decision."

"I'll come!" exclaimed Phillips, getting to his feet instantly, so that the girl might not have time to change her mind.

She touched an electric bell beside the divan, and the mulatto woman who looked like an Indian came with surprising promptitude.

"Till eleven to-morrow!" Phillips said.

Julia echoed his words.

XI

NO sooner was the visitor gone, than Julia floated into the hall.

"Who slammed a door—two or three minutes ago?" she demanded.

"'Twas the wind came up and blew it out of my hand," whispered the maid. "Your sister peeked out of the dining-room and I jes happened to be in the hall. She was beginnin' to be worried, Madam: wanted to make sure I'd told you she was here. But I got her back into the room all right."

"I'm going to her now," Julia said.

It was a vision that turned dusk to dawn for Terry, with the flinging open of the door. At the sound, she stepped out of the bow-window where she had paused to stare down at the river; and the doorway framed a radiant figure draped in what seemed a ball gown. It was pale blue, and sparkled all over with silver, like the sea in moonlight.

"Oh, Jule—*darling!*" the girl cried in joy and thankfulness. "I'm so glad to see you again. It's wonderful—like a dream. But you're dressed for a party. You won't go and leave me yet for a little while, will you, after all this time?"

She had made a motion to fling her arms around Julia, but feared to crush the shimmering gauze. Instead, she caught both her sister's hands, and pressed them to her breast. It felt so young and almost child-like to the touch, under a thin blouse, that a wave of

tenderness as of old times swept over Julia. She released her hands, and heartily hugged the little sister, regardless of ninon and silver embroideries. It was years since the two had seen each other.

"I'm not going out at all," Julia promised, when she had kissed Terry on both cheeks. "This isn't a ball dress, Miss Country Mouse; it's what they call a 'rest gown' or something. By and by a very nice gentleman is calling to see me, but not for nearly an hour, and we'll have lots of time to talk before that. Come into my den, and Emmeline will take your hat and coat. You look as if you were got up for motoring. You must tell me why on earth you came here, and how, and everything."

She drew the girl into the "den," which was like a room in the harem of a sultan; but as Terry knew nothing about harems or sultans, it looked to her merely bizarre and gorgeous in a way very becoming to Julia.

Terry had begun to be frightened during the long moments when she was kept waiting, shut up in the elaborate dining-room. At first, she had fled for refuge to this palace of her fairy princess, without a thought that she might not be welcome; for Julia had always been kind and sweet. As time dragged on, however, she had relived the past, remembering how Mother and Julia had put her off with excuses whenever she begged to be taken to her sister's home. Never had Julia come to Silverwood or to the Blue Moon Inn, without being asked by Terry to take her to New York, and letters from the convent had contained the same request. Invariably Julia said "No"; it couldn't be. There were lots of reasons, and the best was, *"just because."* Mother had forbidden the girl to tease her sister about the visit. Yet here she was in spite of all; and perhaps

Julia would be angry, even when she heard how horrid Mr. Nazlo had been.

The princess showed no signs of anger, however, when she had listened to the story. She lay on the divan with her head on a black cushion, looking more adorable than ever, and kept unbroken silence, her eyes on the young girl's face, as the tale was told. She didn't even smoke; which was unusual for Julia.

"So I didn't know what else to do," Terry ended. "I was so thankful when I got here and heard you were at home. That nice brown maid said she'd pay for my automobile—I mean, my taxi. Then I hoped I was safe. But I was afraid that maybe you mightn't like me to come. You've so often told me I mustn't. Only, this was different. I *had* to!"

"I'm glad you came, child," said Julia. "I'd have liked you to come long ago—often, so far as I myself was concerned. But—well, I've been away a good deal, and even when I was here—I've had a lot of people about, not *your* sort or Mother's. Some of them were a bit like Nazlo. Only I know how to manage his kind, and you don't. Not yet. He's quite a big gun, and no fool. It sounds from what you say as if he'd fallen for you, good and hard—which isn't a bad compliment to a little girl who doesn't know which side her bread's buttered. If you'd played your cards right, he might have gone the limit and married you. But maybe in one way you're like what I was at your age. (I'd been living in this burg a year when I was seventeen!) I mean, maybe you don't want to be married?"

"Not unless I was in love, of course," said Terry.

Julia laughed. "What do *you* know about being in love, my convent kid? Did any boy ever get a chance to make goo-goo eyes at you?"

Terry was scornful. "No, indeed," she said emphatically. "Some of the girls liked boys, and talked about them all they could. Not that it was much, because it's the rule at the convent that two of us are never left together, even to walk in the garden. There are always three—or else one of the Sisters with us. And three can't talk secrets very easily, can they? Not that I cared, because I think boys are dreadfully uninteresting. You see, it was always *different* with me from the other girls."

"How different?" Julia caught her up.

"Oh, well, I couldn't help having my *ideal,*" Terry answered, reluctantly; for she regretted that she had spoken out. That "difference" was sacred. She didn't want to be called upon to explain it.

Julia's interest quickened, though it was more Terry's look than her words that roused it. "What kind of an ideal?" she asked. "Some one in a book?"

"No-o, not in a book."

"Don't be so mysterious. You'll make me think you *were* in love with some one," Julia insisted.

Terry was silent, her lips pressed together.

"*Were* you? *Are* you?"

The girl was desperate. "I don't know whether it's being in love or not," she tried to defend herself. "I couldn't help thinking of him—sort of—worshipping him. Ever since I saw him that time, and he was so splendid—so wonderful to me, I prayed for him to be happy and safe, and for a chance to come some time when I could pay him back, even a little, for what he did for me—only a child he'd never set eyes on before! There was never any one so kind. And since I came home to live with Father I've realised a lot more what he saved me from—what he gave me. It isn't

strange if I'd have my hand cut off to do him good, is it? If you call *that* being in love, it's all I know about it."

By this time the girl's face was burning under her sister's fixed stare, which had turned from amusement to surprise, then to keen interest.

"For-the-love-of-*Mike!*" gurgled Julia. "Say!—talk of Fate! But let's get this right. You mean Miles Sheridan?"

Terry was scarlet, though she had tried to hold her breath because the girls at the convent said if you did it while you counted ten you could stop a blush.

"It doesn't do much harm," she said, "because I never spoke about him to any one at all. I've just *thought* of him. Oh, you can't understand how common the men I see at the Blue Moon seem beside the memory of him I've saved up!"

"And you'd be glad to have your hand cut off to do him good?" Julia repeated.

"I would. It's been a dream of mine, something happening so that I could help him. But of course it never will. He's married, and has been through the war, and I suppose he's always travelling about now, to glorious places in the world—with his wife. I'm not much more than a child, and he's almost old, so—"

"Thirty-three or four—if you call *that* old," Julia laughed.

"Maybe it isn't old for a man. But even if it is, I can't think of him as changed, or seeming old to me. I always call him to myself, the 'Prince,' because he named me 'Cinderella.' Of course he must have forgotten me long ago, but I—"

"You've never seen him since that time when he was

at the Moon?" Julia broke in, oddly intrigued by the small sister's story. "He never wrote or turned up at the Convent to call?"

"No, never," answered Terry.

"I bet he would, if he'd had an idea how his little protégée was growing up. Let me tell you, my child, you're what that Nazlo man of yours would call *some* chicken—some peacherino. I believe you're better looking than me—if you had the clothes."

"Oh, no!" the girl protested, as if she had heard sacrilege. "Why, Jule, you're the most beautiful thing I ever saw, and I—"

"You were always like me, and now we might be two dolls made from the same model," said Julia. "Only *this* doll is just a wee bit battered. I wouldn't say that to any one else. And I don't believe any one's noticed it yet, except myself. Still, there it is. This doll's been in the shop window a long time. And *that* doll—you—is just out of the box, fresh as a new pin. I'm afraid, much as I love you, my kid, I wouldn't want you to go around with me much. I couldn't afford it for my own sake, to say nothing of yours. You—you're modelled on more delicate lines—or I've coarsened a bit. You're made of a grade finer porcelain. Your hair curls naturally—sort of marcels itself. Mine always had to be done, and colouring's dried it, so it wouldn't have the sheen if I didn't brilliantine it well. Oh, it's nearly as good as yours to *look* at. But I know the difference. Your mouth and chin are about the sweetest things they're making in that line. The blueness of your eyes—or the green or the grey, whichever it is—gives them that soft look that gets men. Beside you, my dear, your Jule feels as hard as nails and—and as old as sin. I don't like it!"

"And I don't like to hear you say it! Please don't," Terry begged.

"I never will again," Julia promised. "But I'm leading up to something. Now I've begun and I'd better go on. I suppose you came to ask me to let you stay here?"

"I hardly know. I didn't stop to think. I had to get away from Mr. Nazlo, and I thought if I could find you, you'd help me."

"So I will—if I can. But it's up to you, kid. You don't want to go back to Father?"

"I'm afraid!"

"What are you afraid of, exactly?"

"Why—Mr. Nazlo. Father seems to like him. I don't think he'd mind much what Mr. Nazlo did. And then there are crowds of other men who come. I thought Mr. Nazlo was the best of them. But if he is —the others—" Terry shivered a little. "They look at me—with looks I don't like. They make me feel—somehow sick."

"You don't need to describe to me the way they look." Julia laughed a hard laugh. "I suppose you didn't learn much—about men—at the convent?"

"Nothing at all," Terry said, with wide eyes.

"Not even from the girls?"

"Oh, they talked when they had a chance—about mashes and crushes, and words like that. But I didn't *learn* anything. Father's the only man I know, except —Mr. Sheridan. I won't count Mr. Nazlo!"

"And a fat lot you know about Sheridan. But wait. We're coming back to him by and by. The question is now, what's to become of you if I can't keep you with me?"

Terry's pride rose and, mingling with the pain of

rejection, choked her. "I won't go back to Father," she heard herself decide, and was faintly surprised at the firm decision. "I'd—be a servant at the convent if they'd have me, but I'm afraid they won't. Maybe there are things I could do to earn my living in New York. I know French. I can do typing and take dictation, and—"

"Nonsense! At seventeen—with your looks. The wolves would get you before you had time to turn around. I knew how to manage them. You don't. You're a very different proposition from me. *I* wouldn't have minded Nazlo. I'd have snapped at him—as a stepping-stone. He's worth more than Tom Perrin was. But now listen, kid. I couldn't have kept you, anyhow, even if I'd been staying in New York. It just wouldn't have *done*—for you or for me. As it is, I'm going away. I'm chucking my—career—to get married."

Julia paused for some sign of surprise from Terry. But it did not come. The first blow had already fallen. She couldn't live with Jule. Jule didn't want her. As for this news, it wasn't strange that Julia should get married. With all the men who must have admired her, it was rather strange that she hadn't married one of them long ago.

"He's a South American," Jule went on, "awfully rich and awfully handsome. He's wild about me. The one trouble is, I have to go and live with him in Buenos Aires."

"Oh!" Terry said. "It's like the other end of the world! I don't suppose"—she choked again—"I shall ever see you any more—until I'm old."

"I don't know about that. Manoel says I can come back for a visit often if I like. But I'm not sure I

shall like. I expect to be a swell down there. Manoel's in politics. I can't take you, because men think two's company and three's a crowd. Besides, he might notice that you're prettier than I am. If I didn't look out for myself nobody else would. So that's that!"

"That's that," echoed Terry, drearily.

"I expect you think I'm a brute, kid," Julia began once more, when the fiat had gone forth. "But I'm not as hard as I seem. All this time I've been working up a plan for you. It's a real good plan. Nothing the matter with it whatever—if you've got the pluck you were boasting about just now."

"I—boasting?" Terry was bewildered.

"Why, yes. You said you'd let your right hand be cut off to help your 'Prince'—Miles Sheridan. It's a sort of coincidence—but there's a way you *could* help him. And not hurt yourself, if you kept your head screwed on—anyhow not as much as you'd get hurt at the Blue Moon. In a few weeks you could earn enough money to live on, wherever you wanted to live."

The girl forgot the pain of knowing herself unwanted. Her eyes shone. She lived again! But it was not the money or the ease of living she thought about. In fact, she had ceased to hear before her sister reached that sentence. "Oh, Julia!" she begged, "hurry and tell me what you mean! You're not joking, are you? No, it would be cruel. Can I really help Mr. Sheridan?"

"You really can, if you're not afraid to—make a *big* sacrifice. Not any sentimental sob-stuff, like cutting off your hand. But you'll have to risk your—reputation—if you're wise to what a girl's reputation is. *Are* you?"

"I don't—quite—understand," Terry said. "But I tell you I'd do anything—*anything.*"

"It needn't go as far as *that!*" Julia smiled obscurely. "Still, you'd get talked about. Noses would go up, and mouths down."

"I don't care for noses or mouths," the girl laughed in her excitement. "What can I do for him? It would be a dream come true. Only it seems too good to be real."

"You could save him from wrecking his life." Julia chose her words carefully now, for she was warming to her work. She began to feel that, as things were for the girl, there was but one way out of Terry's troubles. If Fate wasn't stage-managing the business, would the kid have raved to her over Sheridan, just after Hartley Phillips' call? Why, she—Julia—had almost turned his proposition down at first. There was something *queer* about her agreeing to think it over.

"You haven't much cause to love Betty Sheen—his wife—if you remember," Julia went on.

"I do remember," Terry said. "It's wicked to hate people, and I don't hate Betty, though I wake up from *dreaming* that I hate her, sometimes—even now. But it makes me sad to think she's Mr. Sheridan's wife. She was cruel all those years ago. I hope she's changed now, and that he loves her. But I can't *believe* she's good enough for him."

"You needn't try to believe it. She isn't," Julia pronounced. "And Sheridan *doesn't* love her. She's beastly to him. She's been—flirting—with an Italian Prince who's here in America—very fast and very good looking. Sheridan could divorce his wife if he wanted to. Do you know what divorce means?"

"The mother of one of our girls, Kitty Ring, was divorced," Terry replied. "Kitty defended it, but

some of the others said that divorce doesn't *really* unmarry people."

"My goodness, did the convent turn you into a Catholic?" Julia shrieked.

Terry shook her head. "The Sisters never tried to influence us."

"That's all right, then! Sheridan doesn't mean to divorce his wife, because he promised her grandmother to defend her through thick and thin. He's too chivalrous and particular for his own good! He plans instead to free her, as if he was the guilty one, not she."

"Guilty of what?" Terry demanded. She didn't like the word, coupled with the name of her Prince.

Julia threw out her hands with a great sigh. "Good gracious, don't you know anything at *all?*" she groaned.

"I'm afraid I don't know much," the girl confessed. "But can't you explain to me?"

"Can a—a wildcat explain to a tadpole?—Explain the whole scheme of existence? No, that's too big an order! The important thing is, Sheridan's between two evils: the devil and the deep sea. The devil's his wife. The deep sea is—another danger. But there's where you come in, and I *will* explain that much, if you won't interrupt."

Julia was growing "jumpy," as she told herself. To her, who knew so much, it began to seem that Terry, who knew so little, was a fool. She was tempted to give the girl one shock about Life with a capital L, and get it over. But she thought of the convent, and something held her back. With impatience of her task blended a kind of tenderness, half contempt, half affection.

"What am I to say to the little owl?" she wondered.

Terry waited.

XII

WHEN Julia Divine needed to think, or to make up her mind, she generally lit a fresh cigarette. It gave time for a pause, and sometimes brought inspiration, therefore it was a good trick, especially as she had taught herself how to make smoke-rings becomingly.

When she had produced a few perfect circles, she felt better able to cope with the kid's abysmal ignorance.

"You don't know me awfully well," she said. "We haven't seen much of each other. But I'm your big sister, and you trust me, don't you?"

"Oh, yes!" Terry assured her eagerly.

"That's right! Now listen again, baby. Miles Sheridan has got a yacht. It's named after Mrs. Parmalee's old place that he loved—and you loved too—Silverwood. Sheridan's planning to take a long trip on board her—all the way across the ocean, to beautiful places you must have heard about, in France and Italy, and who knows where."

"Does he go because he wants to be away from—his wife?" the girl almost whispered.

"There's more in it! It's part of his self-sacrifice, freeing that horrid, stuck-up little cat, and getting himself talked about instead of her. If he takes a young woman on the yacht with him—even if they both behave themselves like plaster saints and are as good as gold—the world will say he's wicked. Mrs. Sheridan can sue for a divorce and get it. The thing is, to engage some well-known person, an—an actress, like me, for

instance, for the trip, because there *has* to be a scandal if there's to be the sort of divorce that's legal everywhere. That's the quick, sure-fire way to make a scandal: a married man goes off with a woman who isn't his wife. Not very nice, maybe! But we have to take the world as it is. This very day a great friend of Sheridan's was here, asking if I'd accept the job—go on the yacht, I mean. And I'd have said 'Yes,' like a shot, if it weren't for my Manoel, and being married. Are you shocked? But no, don't answer yet, because I want to tell you first why I'd have accepted. There's the money, of course. That's one thing. And the trip would be fun. But the big reason is—*you.*"

"Me?" Terry repeated, drowning in a sea of strange words, strange worldly wisdom.

"Yes. Even *I* am grateful to Sheridan for what he did for you. Heaven knows what he may have saved you from, having you sent to the convent and brought up away from home! Of course, I'm not so keen on him as *you* are. But I'd have done a good deal, even if there hadn't been a *cent* in it for me, to help Miles Sheridan out of a scrape. You can't understand yet, but my turning down the job means that sure as fate some female devil will stick her claws into him for good and all. Hartley Phillips, his friend, was saying that very thing to-day. I'm the only girl he knows who wouldn't try to grab a rich young man in such a situation. What'll happen will be this: That little beast Betty'll divorce him, and the poor chap—your Prince! —will be out of the frying pan into the fire. The woman who's been on his yacht with him (the co-respondent she'll be called in law while the divorce case is on)—will have him at her mercy, unless he's sharp as brass tacks—which he isn't. The chivalrous way

he's treating his wife, to say nothing of what he did for you, shows what he is at heart. And the woman—almost any woman but me—will take advantage. She'll make him marry her. His life will be ruined."

"Oh, how horrible!" Terry cried. Her face was pale and her eyes dark with tragedy. "I—I could *kill* such a woman! Jule, dearest Jule, can't you save him somehow?"

"*I* can't," said Julia. "But you can. That's what I've been trying to tell you all this time, without throwing it at your head in a chunk. You and I are one in this. We both want to help, not harm, Miles Sheridan. Will *you* be the girl on the yacht?"

"I? Why, he wouldn't have me," Terry stammered, when she got back her breath. "You said that *you* could do good because you're well known. I'm not known at all—"

"You don't get the idea. Of course, you'd have to pass yourself off for me, and be—Juliet Divine."

Terry looked overwhelmed. For an instant, Julia thought that the child was going to faint.

"She isn't up to it. I might have known, and saved myself from wasting energy," the elder woman told herself, vexed almost to slapping point. But Terry spoke, in a half whisper, "*Could* I do that?" she asked.

"Of course you could!" Julia cheered up visibly. It did seem a shame to throw away such a God-sent chance. She had worked herself into a keen desire that the business should be carried through. "What's the good of our being like two peas in the same pod if we can't make use of it ever? If your convent conscience is shocked, you don't need to *say* you're Juliet Divine. Others will do the saying for you. They'll take you for granted. 'Tisn't as if you'd be among

intimate friends of mine. Sheridan may have seen me on the stage, never off; and Hartley Phillips never came near enough to touch me with a ten-foot pole, till to-day. Why, the whole thing's easy as falling off a log! Come and look in this big glass with me." She slid off the divan, showing a yard of film-clad leg. Terry remained motionless, as if dazed, but Julia took an arm and marched her in front of a triple mirror. The black and the hazel eyes met in its clear depths. Suddenly the younger girl realised as she had not realised before the likeness and the unlikeness between her and her sister.

It was true; she *did* make her sister look hard! Compared with her eyes, Julia's might have been composed of bright glass, like those of a beautifully made doll. Compared with her complexion of a child, Julia's skin might have been skilfully enamelled. And Julia's thick hair, bleached from its original black to auburn, was of a more sophisticated colour than the natural red of Terry's. Still, the two faces were amazingly alike, even seen side by side. Terry admitted to herself that apart, she and Julia might be mistaken one for the other, except by one who knew both well and saw them often,—like Father, for instance.

"We might be twins!" laughed Julia. "Do you warm to the work, honey?"

Terry shivered. "I'd hate and loathe deceiving him!" she said.

Julia let go the girl's hand, almost flung it away from her. "Oh, *damn!* You make me tired!" she snapped. "I've explained and argued till I'm blue in the face. If you don't want to save your wonderful hero, let him rip. He can go to hell for all I care. And you—can go back to Father!"

Years ago, in rows with Terence, Julia had thrown such words about. But after the gentle peace of the convent, Terry felt as if mud had been dashed in her face. Still, she did not shrink. Instead she was suddenly calm.

"You look almost ugly when you talk like that, Jule," she said, coldly, "and you didn't let me finish. I *would* hate deceiving Mr. Sheridan. All the same I'd do even that for his good. I don't believe I *could* tell lies, because they never would come, somehow. But you say I wouldn't have to tell them. If he finds me out, I suppose he'll be awfully angry. Not that it matters! I'll bear anything, if you'll tell me just what to do, and how to behave, so I don't make some dreadful mistake, and hurt him."

"I'll coach you," Julia promised. "I'm glad to see you've got some of my pluck after all! You're sure you won't change your mind—weaken?"

"I'm sure," said Terry.

"Good. Jolly good! You'll kill two birds with one stone, my dear! Save Sheridan—and provide for yourself. There'll be the trip—and the case afterwards. That's the medicine. But afterwards you'll be your own girl, and have your reward! Why, for *that* matter, you'll be your own girl all through! . . . Phillips will come back in the morning to hear what I've decided. Of course, he doesn't know you exist—and mustn't. We—hark, there's the bell! It will be Manoel. Now, honey, you mustn't mind, but I don't want him to see you—ever. Emmeline'll hide you tonight—in the kitchen or somewhere. And I'll arrange to put you in a real nice home till Sheridan's yacht is ready to start."

. . . . . .

Certainly the kitchen was the one safe place in Miss Divine's flat, when her Manoel was loose in the precincts. The South American was a handsome, restless person, who could never sit still for ten minutes on end, but walked about, dropping cigarette-ashes and humming a few notes from some opera. He would spring up and wander into the dining-room to mix cocktails; or steal into Julia's bedroom to lay a "surprise present" on the shrine of her dressing-table, among her rings and bracelets.

His fiancée divined other and subtler motives under this ubiquitousness: suspicion of her, a jealous wish to make sure that she concealed nothing and no one. To invent an excuse to keep him in one room would be fatal. He would believe the worst!

Julia thought herself lucky, at twenty-seven, to have secured a millionaire who wished to marry and "range himself." If necessary she would have sacrificed the little sister to hold him.

Emmeline set a small work table close to the kitchen window, and arranged an attractive tray for Terry. All cooking was done by electricity, and a light wind which had sprung up at sunset, cooled the room. Manoel Fernandez was engaged to talk business with some men at the club about eleven o'clock, so at half-past ten he bade Julia good night—decorously, as a man says good night to the woman he'll marry. Then Julia appeared in the kitchen, to find a pale, nervous, but wide-awake Terry.

There was no need to torture the child with more planning that night: to-morrow would do. As for Father, let him worry a bit! Julia was more interested in the state of mind of Mr. Nazlo than in her parent's. She knew his "little ways" by hearsay, and it appealed

to her sense of humour that he should have been snubbed by a baby-child. She wondered if he had raced back to Oldport with a version of the story.

Terry was in a curious, introspective mood, but she could not help noticing and being dazzled by the splendour of Julia's bedroom. It was more remarkable than anything else in the handsome flat. The bed was of gilded wicker, framed in carved, ivory-tinted wood, with cupids throwing garlands of roses. More cupids held up curtains of pale, rose-coloured silk and lace; and even the mirror over the dressing-table was supported by cupids. As for that dressing-table, the things on it were more beautiful than anything Terry had imagined, far more gorgeous than the gold-topped bottles and jars she had upset in Betty Sheen's room long ago. These were gold, too, and jewelled with emeralds—Miss Divine's "birth stone"—and scattered among them on the table were long strings of the same splendid green stones. A rope of pearls lay there too, with several bangles, and a quantity of rings.

"Manoel is always bringing me the loveliest presents," Julia explained. "He doesn't want me to keep any of my old things when we're married; things that —that other people gave me. I shall sell most of them. But I must give you some to wear on Sheridan's yacht. Nobody would believe you were the Million-Dollar Doll if you weren't hung with pearls and my favourite emeralds, or plastered with diamonds."

It was on the tip of Terry's tongue to cry out that she couldn't wear a lot of jewels; that she wouldn't "feel like herself" in them. But then, she remembered that she wouldn't *be* herself! Besides, Julia—very good-natured now—might lose her temper again, and fling "damns" about.

The girl accepted a nightgown of pale rose georgette, though at the convent, and since, she had gone to bed in a starched white garment almost as thick and stiff as a board. Julia had no thick, stiff things, however, so Terry had to be satisfied with what she could get, and not even show embarrassment at sight of herself in a pinkish mist. After "tubbing" (as Julia called it) in a bath of glittering crystal, filled with rose-scented water, the girl was invited to share her sister's bed.

It felt soft as down; the linen was cool and slippery, like silver; it smelled of a thousand flowers; and yet, after Julia slept, Terry lay staring into the rose dusk of an electric night-light, wide awake.

She was going on a yacht—a yacht named after Silverwood—going for a long trip on the sea with Miles Sheridan. Every one would say that this was a terrible thing to do. Nobody would love or respect her again. Perhaps all the rest of her life would be spoiled. She would become a sort of pariah. Yes, that was the word, a pariah! The kind Sisters at the convent would turn away from her if they knew. It must be so, because even Julia—who used such dreadful words—warned her that she would have to sacrifice the world's good will. Perhaps the thing she had promised to do would be wicked in the sight of heaven also? God might punish her! She'd tell Him that she *meant* no wrong. She prayed that He would forgive. But at the worst, there was no punishment she was not ready to risk for the Prince's sake.

XIII

IT was half-past twelve, and they had been in bed for an hour when the telephone sounded close to Julia's ear.

She sat up instantly, and did something which changed the light from dusky rose to white. "Good gracious!" she gasped. "Can it be Manoel? I hope nothing's happened!"

Terry had not yet fallen asleep, but she kept silence. Her eyes were wide and dark.

"Hello! Who is it?" Julia was asking. "Why, *Dad,* is that you?" Speaking, she glanced at her sister. "Oh—well, yes, I *do* know where she is. But what made you guess?"

Desmond, calling from far off at the Blue Moon, answered: "When Nazlo ran back and said the girl had given him the slip, I couldn't think, any more than he could, what had become of her. But I remembered Nazlo mentioning you, the day he met Terry, and his letting it out to her that you were back in New York. I wasn't dead sure the kid had your address, but I didn't see how she could have missed getting hold of it, all these years you've lived at the Ardlamont. So I put two and two together. I'd have called up before, but Nazlo's only just gone."

"I hope you didn't say anything about me?" Julia snapped, while Terry listened in suspense, picking up threads of the conversation.

"What do you take me for?" came Desmond's scornful snort over the wire. "Of course I wasn't such a

damn fool. Will you bring Terry home to-morrow, or send her with that mulatto girl of yours? Or will I have to come for her? I won't trust her to travel alone. She might play me a trick, and beat it to the convent, or somewhere."

"I think I've got a good opening in New York for Terry," Julia answered, after a slight pause. "I believe it wouldn't be a bad plan to leave her in my care for a while. She doesn't like your pal Nazlo. He seems to have scared her with his little ways."

"She's a donkey," growled Desmond. "The man's wild over her. Even now, if she plays her cards right, she can have him. I've told Nazlo she's sure gone to some school friend, and she'll turn up at home so meek butter won't melt in her mouth, to-morrow."

"He doesn't want to marry her," Julia warned.

"I bet he does!" was flung back.

"I've never met him myself, but I've seen him often. They say he's got a wife in the south of France."

"Pooh! I don't believe it."

"Well, he goes there every year, anyhow. And you can't bank on a man like Nazlo. *My* plan's a dead cert if it comes off. There's a lot of money in it to be scooped up inside two or three months."

"Sounds fishy."

"It isn't."

"How would Terry come out at the end of the job?"

"The same as she is now."

"Well, I suppose I can trust you, Jule. But I've got to hear the whole story before I put my stamp and seal."

"That's all right; keep your hair on, old man, and I'll run down in the auto for a spiel to-morrow afternoon. Now I'm going to ring off. I was asleep when you called me. I'm in bed."

"What?" incredulously. "You asleep in bed at twelve-thirty? What dope are you giving me, Jule?"

"It isn't any dope. I'm a good little girl these times, and I go to bed with the birds. Ta, ta!"

As she hung up the receiver, Julia threw a glance at the face on the pillow. "I thought you couldn't snooze through all that!" she laughed. "I don't need to tell you anything, do I?"

"Father wants me back, and you're going to persuade him to let me stay in New York," Terry said. "But what did you mean about the money? I forgot to ask when you spoke about it before."

"Twenty thousand dollars is the bid I screwed out of Hartley Phillips," Julia boasted.

"*I* won't have it!" Terry cried. "I'd rather die. Mr. Sheridan's done enough for me already."

"The money will be paid in instalments, I expect—one at the beginning of the trip and one at the end," Julia calmed her. "*I'll* get all the credit and the discredit, and the cash too if you turn it down."

"I do turn it down," the girl persisted.

"That's that then. Let's go to sleep and forget it!" advised the other, with a yawn.

Off went the white light. The faces of the two girls, and the faces of the carved, laughing cupids seemed suddenly to be veiled in pink gauze.

. . . . . .

Hartley Phillips arrived promptly at eleven o'clock, finding Miss Divine dressed to go out. She was lunching early with a friend away downtown, she announced, but there was time for a little chat. On thinking his proposition over, she was inclined after all to accept, if she could "fix things to get away," provided conditions were right. When did Mr. Sheridan intend to start?

How long did he expect his yachting trip to last? And where did he mean to go?

Phillips had an answer ready for each question. His friend couldn't leave in less than five or six weeks. He planned to start the first week in October, and to be gone about two months. He intended cruising in the Mediterranean, and the principal stop would be at Monte Carlo. A good many people he knew, and who knew his wife, would be there early in the season because they had taken villas. Monte was just the place to give him and his companion the notoriety he was out to get.

Julia listened quietly. The insulting supposition that she was past being hurt by notoriety left her cold, although she was sharp enough to detect it. What made her thoughtful was the delicate adjustment necessary to fit in Manoel Fernandez' plans with those of Miles Sheridan.

She had paid too little attention to that point of view last night in her eagerness to "settle" Terry for life with a good *dot*. It seemed to Julia that here was an almost miraculous chance for the girl. Sheridan wouldn't thrust his company upon her, except in public. Julia imagined—from what she had heard of a Puritan streak in him—that he would stick faithfully to his bargain in that regard. Or, if worst came to worst through some sudden temptation, Sheridan was the type who would atone in the conventional way after the divorce. As Terry was in love with him already there wasn't much to fuss about from any point of view. Of course, marriage would mean Sheridan's finding out the truth about the girl in the end. But sufficient for the day was the evil thereof!

As for the money, though the Silly Billy had refused

it in advance, it would be banked for her. Señora Fernandez would be very rich, and could afford a gift of twenty thousand dollars to her sister. Manoel, who mustn't see Terry, would suppose that it came out of her own private fortune, and in his jealousy of the past would think it a good riddance. Even Terry need never know where the "present" originated.

Julia glowed with a sense of disinterested virtue in her anxiety for Terry's welfare. She was ready for sacrifices, but there was one she would not make: she'd run no risk of losing Fernandez! So before deciding once and for all to accept Phillips' offer, she studied the situation as it concerned Manoel.

She thought of his business trip to Europe, which at first glance had seemed to clear the coast. Suppose, while in Spain, he heard of Sheridan's cruise and the name of the girl who travelled with him? Would he jump to the conclusion that the woman he'd left in New York had run away with another man?

Despite his boisterous joviality and his passion which overstepped the past, Julia had caught glimpses of Manoel's Latin temper. She pictured him rushing off to see for himself if the rumour were true; at Algiers, for instance, where the yacht was pretty sure to anchor. If he saw Terry from a distance, he'd believe that he saw Julia; and then—well, the devil would be to pay!

She decided on the instant that this risk wasn't worth taking. She would marry Manoel and go with him to Spain, after all. Then she'd be safe, whatever happened to Terry. Her engagement was very new. She hadn't told any one except her father, her sister, and Phillips. She'd meant to have a quiet wedding in any case, because she didn't wish Señora Fernandez to be associated in people's minds with Juliet Divine. She

could slip away from New York with her husband, and hardly any one would know what had become of the "Million Dollar Doll."

When she had mapped out her own private plans, Julia turned her attention energetically to business. Phillips was amused and a little disgusted with her shrewd bargaining. She must have a maid to wait upon her on board "Silverwood." The money must be paid in two instalments, one before starting, and one at the end of the cruise. She would prefer cash rather than cheques. In her circumstances, large cheques from Mr. Sheridan might lead to an awkward situation. Also "mum was to be the word" about her presence on the yacht until the time for departure. After that, she didn't care how much talk there was. She quite realised that Sheridan was paying for talk!

Phillips agreed to all her demands, in the name of his friend, arranging also to let Miss Divine know the date of sailing, and soon. Meanwhile, she could prepare her wardrobe not only for the voyage, but for Monte Carlo and Algiers.

When everything was clear between them, he bade his hostess good morning and directed the chauffeur to drive to Washington Square. Miles Sheridan had a studio there, where he spent most of his time just now, more as an excuse for getting away from his wife than because he wanted to paint. He had done some strange, haunting pictures of battle-fields, when he was fighting in France, and had been ready to arrange an exhibition of his work, when he stumbled upon the bald truth of Betty's affair with Paul di Salvano. He had abandoned the exhibition, had ceased to use his club, or to go anywhere except to the studio.

Hartley Phillips, his oldest friend, was the only per-

son he had talked with during the three weeks since the bombshell burst. And Phillips knew that Miles would have given him no confidence, if he hadn't learned the truth about Mrs. Sheridan at the time when it broke upon her husband. Miles had brought him home late one night, when the two men had been to Washington attending a soldiers' reunion. They had walked into the library of Sheridan's house, to find Betty and the Italian ex-airman together.

"I've fixed up everything with Miss Divine," Phillips told his friend. "Of course you know I think you're a fool to throw away your reputation for your wife's sake. She doesn't deserve it. But since you're determined, you can't do better than follow my suggestion about this girl. By Jove, she's a queer combination. She's got the face of—well, not of an angel: let's say a goddess; the brains of a parrot and the heart of a hawk. I'm rather interested to know what impression she'll make on you."

"The same as on you, no doubt," Sheridan answered dully. "I shall see nothing of her at all on board."

"So you think," warned Phillips. "But I wouldn't put it past that young person to make a dead set at you, my boy. She's supposed to be engaged to some chap—must be a damned ass to take her—but if she could fasten her claws into you, she'd drop the other prey so quick you couldn't say 'Jack Robinson!' "

"You don't need to warn me," Sheridan smiled grimly. "I suppose your scheme's a good one for the purpose, but I hate these painted harpies. They make me sick! I shall be in no danger from Miss Juliet Divine."

XIV

TERESA DESMOND at seventeen was the child that only a convent-bred girl can be at that age and this age of the world.

The nuns prided themselves upon their modern broad-mindedness, but the pupils went away "finished" while still very young; therefore practical knowledge of life and its secrets remained for parents or the shock of experience to impart. As Terry had told Julia, no two girl-pupils were allowed to be alone together; consequently there were few stealthy talks, each girl fearing that she might be "given away" by the unwelcome third. For the same reason, forbidden books were seldom passed round, and Terry had been one of those whose childish purity, whose ridiculous ignorance, remained cruelly inviolate. She had been so grateful for her education, so devoted to the nuns who gave it, that bolder spirits failed to tempt her with smuggled French novels which the nuns would have loathed. Not that Terry would have told tales. But she was always "on the side of the angels," never on that of the gay little, clandestine "devils."

Despite her ignorance of vital facts, however, the girl saw clearly that the yachting adventure would horrify the dear Sisters. There was one who taught "etiquette," though her ideas were considered old-fashioned by the girls. Things had changed since her day, and especially since the war, they argued: whereas in the convent nothing ever changed.

"Young ladies should not go about alone with young men, unless they are related," was one maxim of "the

Etiquette Sister" which Terry remembered. She almost laughed at it now. Yet it would have hurt her to think of it, if her spirit had not rushed already to meet the great adventure which meant salvation for her Prince. The high motive of self-sacrifice cooled the new fire in her blood, yet now and then, from below the calm surface of generous resolve, something different peeped out for an instant. The girl's eyes were too clear not to see it, though she pushed the thing down, and forbade it to exist. She knew in her heart that beneath the wish to help him, there was a burning desire to see Miles Sheridan again, to be near him day after day, to be important in his life; perhaps to be thanked, after a very long time, for what she had done for him. She knew also that she was sorry not to be starting upon the cruise at once, instead of being forced to wait!

If only she could count the days, it wouldn't be so bad. And there were other reasons not connected with Sheridan why she longed to get away. She was afraid of her father, even after Julia had motored to the Blue Moon, explained as much as she thought worth while, and apparently settled everything. Besides, she hated the order to "hide" from Manoel. She didn't dislike the little white kitchen, but it shamed her to be hustled into it whenever the doorbell sounded.

Julia did not tell Terry that the wedding plans were changed because of her, and that the marriage was being hurried on because of the new scheme. The girl heard only the date and that it would be soon, as Manoel had decided that the parting would be too hard.

The hidden one couldn't, of course, appear at the wedding, which was to take place in the presence of only two witnesses, and in a Roman Catholic church,

Fernandez being vaguely of that religion. The question was, how to dispose of the girl with some trustworthy person who would guard her till the last day, sending her safely on board Sheridan's yacht at the right moment?

After two or three days of secret worry, Julia confided in Emmeline—not for the first time. It seemed that there was a boarding-house in Jersey City, where Emmeline's widowed sister was cook-housekeeper. The place was "deadly respectable," given up almost exclusively to old ladies. Terry could stay there till after the wedding. As soon as the newly married couple had gone, Emmeline would take the girl back to Julia's apartment. When "Silverwood" had sailed, the flat was to be let furnished, for a year, when possibly Manoel might bring his wife to New York for a visit.

Anything was better than hiding from Manoel, or going back to the Blue Moon! Julia engaged the best room in the boarding-house for her little sister, and all the old ladies were kind. Terry's instructions were, "not to tell any one anything," and they were difficult to obey. The kind old ladies asked so many kind questions! But the girl had a developing sense of humour (few women develop it till they've passed twenty!) and the game of bluff was rather fun. It kept her impatience from reaching the boiling point.

Back in the apartment, life was still very complicated. Because of her likeness to Julia, and the coming trip with Sheridan, the girl's very existence was wrapped in mystery. Nobody had been told of Julia's marriage. The news wasn't supposed to leak out until after Terry's cruise with Sheridan was over. Then, if Miss Divine had to be called as a witness in the divorce case people must think what they liked. Anyhow,

Manoel would have no cause to be jealous of his wife: Julia would have secured her millionaire.

Fortunately, the weather remained hot. New York was "empty." The few callers at the flat were told that "Miss Divine was in the country." Terry's exercise had to be taken early in the morning, or after dark, when Emmeline would sometimes chaperon her for a walk or a drive in a taxi. Daytime hours were whiled away by the fitting on of dresses which Julia had left to be altered for "the kid." Emmeline was wonderful at this work and had no jealousy of her charge, for "Madam" had been more than generous with her.

She would gladly have joined the yachting party as "Miss Divine's maid," but this proposal from Julia to Hartley Phillips was promptly vetoed by Sheridan. An elderly woman, an old family servant, who always travelled on the yacht, would wait on Miss Divine. Sheridan preferred that his "guest" should bring no stranger on board. Julia would have fought for her rights, had they been menaced: but as it was only a question of little Terry, who had never had a maid, Sheridan was allowed to have his way.

The girl's longing to escape, her high-keyed exaltation, did not prevent her from thrilling a little now and then over the wonderful things that were to be hers. There were such fairylike dresses and hats and cloaks! It had been a shock at first, even to try on bright colours, after deep mourning. But Mother had hated black. Terry had worn it more because it gave her a kind of screen, set her apart from the loud gaieties of the Blue Moon, than because it was the conventional thing. She would not have been human, and seventeen, if her clothes and her jewels hadn't enlivened the weariness of waiting.

Miles Sheridan never communicated with Miss Divine, but Hartley Phillips telephoned occasionally to the flat.

It was always Emmeline who answered. According to her, "Madam" happened to be out, or engaged, or lying down with a headache; and at last Phillips' suspicious were excited. It would be awkward if the girl should take some whim and let Miles down when it was too late to find a substitute. The plan was his, and it was up to him to see that nothing went wrong. He made up his mind to see for himself that no plot was being hatched.

Late one afternoon, the electric bell at the front door of the apartment sounded. This hadn't happened for some days, as those of Julia's friends who were in New York had all been "choked off" on one excuse or other.

Emmeline was fitting the girl with a white cloth skirt and coat that were too large, and she left her victim bristling with pins as she ran to answer the door. Her eyes bulged at sight of the visitor, and mechanically she made a motion to shut him out.

Phillips was too quick for her. He pushed into the hall, insisting: "I must see Miss Divine."

"I'm sorry; she's out, sir," the mulatto woman assured him.

"Very well. I'll wait till she comes in," he persevered. "This farce that's been going on over the 'phone has lasted long enough. You are in her confidence, and I send this message by you. In less than three days the yacht sails. Miss Divine has got to prove to me by showing herself now, that she's playing the game. Otherwise, the bargain is off. Off, from to-night!—and I get some one else to take her place for the trip."

XV

EMMELINE'S experience had taught her how to make the best of a bad situation.

"Come in, sir," she invited, with sudden meekness. "Madam—Miss Divine—told me to *say* she wasn't 'at home.' But she is *in*. I'll enquire if she'll see you."

"Give her the message exactly as I gave it to you," Phillips said sternly, his theory being that, the more brutal you were, the more you impressed women like Juliet Divine and her confidante. He followed the woman to the door of a large room where Julia had entertained her card parties. It was handsome, but unfriendly-looking in the dust sheets that covered the furniture.

Phillips would not sit down to wait. He prowled about impatiently, frowning at the flamboyant pictures in expensive frames and sneering at Juliet's taste—or lack of it.

"Vulgar all the way through to her soul, if any," he mumbled. "If she doesn't show up in five minutes, I'm damned if I don't go! I'll take it as a sign she's up to some foxy trick."

But she came in less than three minutes, a slim white thing in a plain black dress, a creature more beautiful than he remembered her, a living contradiction of his thoughts. Phillips found his fury unaccountably cooling. Perhaps she hadn't meant to deceive him. Anyhow, something had etherealised her and she looked astonishingly young.

Terry's heart was knocking in her breast. Emmeline

had rushed back, pounced upon her, almost with violence, and torn off the dress she had been fitting. It had seemed to the girl beyond her courage to face Mr. Phillips, but Emmeline (who was to receive a small percentage from the twenty thousand if all went well) urged passionately that Miss *must* see the gentleman. If she refused, the fat was in the fire! And there was no time to lose. He was in a dreadful stew! Terry had thrown aside her own black frock, and the quickest thing was to slip it on again: nothing of Julia's which would fasten easily was quite ready to wear.

Emmeline trembled to let her charge meet Mr. Phillips clad in such absurd simplicity: but even that was better than allowing him to lose patience.

"I began to suspect you'd given us the slip, thrown us over," said Hartley Phillips, bluntly. But his tone was less harsh than he had intended.

He watched the girl, expecting some pert retort, but she gave him no answer. If she hadn't been Juliet Divine, he might have thought that she seemed frightened. But it would take something to scare the Million Dollar Doll! He felt that there was mystery in her look and manner.

"Well? . . . Why don't you speak?" he went on.

"I don't know what to say," confessed Terry.

"Haven't you got any explanation of putting me off a dozen times? What I want is the truth, you know. Don't go to the trouble of inventing lies, pretty lady!"

"I don't tell lies," the girl said shortly. Her chin went up. She looked like a tall child unjustly slapped.

"The devil you don't, my dear!" Phillips could not help laughing at her injured tone.

It was bad enough to hear Father and Julia use rough words which would shock the nuns! Terry was

outraged that a stranger should treat Julia (as he supposed) thus lightly. It was in her mind that for Julia's sake she ought to protest, and a look of the meek, yet obstinate Mary Desmond suddenly stiffened the young face of Mary's daughter.

"I didn't know people talked about the devil except —except in their *families,* unless they were *very* coarse," she said firmly.

Hartley Phillips was somewhat taken aback. The rebuke was so quaintly put and so unexpected that he wanted to laugh again, but didn't quite dare. He felt that the tables had been turned upon him. He had come to scold, and was being scolded.

But no doubt that was precisely the little cat's game! She had balanced a chip on her shoulder, and was egging him on to knock it off. Very likely she really did want an excuse to wriggle out of the bargain she hadn't been keen to accept; but if so she wouldn't get it from him. Though he'd threatened to find some one else for the yachting trip, if Miss Divine didn't toe the mark, he knew no one who would fill the bill as she filled it.

"I'm sorry!" he said, scarcely letting his eyes twinkle. "I eat my own words—including the devil. But you must admit I have a grievance. For all I could tell, you might have left New York, and turned us down cold for some other business."

"Oh, I wouldn't do such a thing! I wouldn't, even if I—" Terry caught back her words. The blush that flooded her face seemed to Phillips an achievement. There couldn't be much paint and powder after all, for that colour to come through!

"I used always to believe you were a good little sport," he apologised. "I'm glad I was right. But all those excuses—those naps—those headaches! You

don't look as if you'd been out of sorts. On the contrary, you look about ten years younger than when I saw you last."

"Oh, I *hope* not!" cried Terry, then blushed more than ever. The blood that streamed to her forehead forced tears to her eyes.

This time Phillips could not keep back his laughter. "I see your point," he said. "As you looked only about twenty-one before, going back ten years would make you a child of eleven! I seem rather clumsy to-day. But never mind, as you mean to play fair, we'll let bygones be bygones. I had to find out for certain if you were prepared to keep your contract; and I came to say, too, that I shall call for you myself, about two hours before 'Silverwood' is due to sail, and march you on board. Mr. Sheridan is—unable to do this. I hope you don't mind?"

"I—never supposed he would come for me," said Terry.

The Million Dollar Doll humble! Phillips was getting a bewildering number of new lights upon her character. But, after each shock, he told himself that it was part of the game. She was merely practising upon him, to see what success she might hope to make with Sheridan later on, in the role of ingénue. He decided to warn Miles, whose treatment of Betty proved how soft he was towards women, in some ways.

"That's all right then," Phillips replied cheerfully; and went on to give Miss Divine her instructions. She must be ready early in the morning, day after to-morrow. He would call for her at ten o'clock, in a taxi, as his own car was laid up (Julia would have known that this was not true: that he didn't wish his act of friendship for Sheridan to be too conspicuous); there would

be a second taxi for luggage: within reason it might be as much as she liked: and the yacht would sail at twelve.

The girl thanked him quietly for everything. Not a single pert speech, not a single new extortion! This game was really deep. Phillips began to enjoy it more than he would have thought possible at first, for the creature's skill and ingenuity pleased him. His own sharpness pleased him also, for he told himself that he wasn't in the least taken in.

As his motor was forced to give him a rest-cure, with traffic held up at Fifth Avenue and 34th Street, a miniature purple limousine sneaked into a cranny of space close to his car. Phillips recognised it in a flash, and stole a glance at the occupant: Betty Sheridan.

Miles was the one human being the elder man devotedly loved and his attachment to his friend caused him to detest Betty. As he sat in his big car, scowling at her in the dainty small one, he sent active waves of dislike towards the charming figure, exquisitely dressed in mauve that toned with the automobile. He would have been glad to see the car smashed to matchwood, with Betty in it!

If she were dead, Miles wouldn't need to go through this dreary farce on board "Silverwood," in order to take his wife's guilt on his own shoulders. Phillips could not think calmly of the pleasant future prepared for Betty Sheridan, by Miles' sacrifice: her divorce from him; the big sum in alimony she would get—big enough to make marriage possible with the man who had infatuated her—Prince Paul di Salvano. Phillips wished he hadn't run across the woman this morning!

As if those hate-waves had reached, and given her an electric shock, Betty turned her head and stared

straight at Hartley Phillips before he could avert his eyes and pretend not to see her. Outwardly the two were on quite good terms. Although Betty was aware that Phillips' eyes had seen, his ears heard, her secret, he was, like all the world—supposed to ignore the tension between husband and wife. Betty was staying with a friend in Greenwich, and the New York house was in the decorators' hands: the alleged reason why Miles lived at the studio. The legend was that the world knew nothing, because there was nothing to know, until "the truth" about the yachting trip should leak out. Meanwhile, Mrs. Sheridan was a neglected young wife, whose pensiveness became her in shades of lavender.

She turned a face that had not changed much in feature or colouring in the seven years since Terry Desmond had peeped from an upper window of the Blue Moon. It had changed in outline, however, for Betty had been in dreadful danger of growing overplump, and she had dieted and drugged herself so violently that her cheeks were thin instead of round. This made her look almost, if not quite, her twenty-eight years, but it made her also more interesting, less of the Christmas-card, chocolate-box type. Her golden hair was as golden as ever, perhaps more golden, and her turquoise-blue eyes had gained expression from an artistic darkening of brows and lashes. Whence the improvement came, a celebrated lady in Fifth Avenue could have told. In fact, Betty was on her way to the lady at that moment; had come to New York from Greenwich on purpose—at least, that was the purpose alleged to her hostess.

Mrs. Sheridan smiled, and bowed to Phillips, with a showing of dimples and a gay, short little nod which

she cultivated: then the traffic was allowed to move, and the big, dark green car and the small purple one lost sight of each other.

"Even that minx, Juliet Divine, is better than Betty Sheridan," Hartley Phillips thought.

"He looks as if he could bite—hateful old brute!" Betty said to herself. And she wondered if Phillips had had any hand in arranging the yachting trip, about which Miles had written her a curt note.

He had said, "I am going away for a cruise in the Mediterranean. I shall have a companion. You will hear details later and can act according to your judgment." No more than that: but enough had passed between them before they parted completely, for her to be sure that the companion would be a woman. She rather wondered what woman! Just idle curiosity, of course, not jealousy at all. Most likely it would be some one well known. It would be fun to hear what people would say when the story was sprung on them. Betty could hardly wait for that to happen, because then her chance to live, really to live, would come. She felt very happy and interested in life, and entirely indifferent to Hartley Phillips' silly waves of hatred.

Phillips had business in Washington that night and the next day. Possibly he would have no chance for another private talk with Miles Sheridan before the yacht steamed away on her cruise of adventure. But he scrawled a few lines and sent them by messenger to Sheridan's studio.

"I went up to the Ardlamont and managed to see J. D. She is all right, fortunately, and I'm to take her on board about eleven day after to-morrow. I meant to break to her a few details of your iron programme for the trip, but couldn't get them out, somehow She

was in rather a jumpy mood, and I thought it would be safer to let her realise everything *after* she'd started than before. It's perfectly fair, and all she wants is the money. Her latest dodge is to play the ingénue. She plays it well, but it didn't impose on me, and I don't expect it will on you. Yours. H. P."

XVI

"WELL, here we are," announced Phillips, as the taxi stopped at a Brooklyn pier. He got out, and offered Terry a hand, but she did not see it. She was looking at the yacht which was to be her floating home for two months—with Miles Sheridan.

She had seen plenty of small yachts passing in the distance when she played in front of the Blue Moon, as a little girl, but this one was of noble proportions, painted white, and her lines were full of dignity and grace. Her brass glittered as if she had been newly polished from stem to stern, and smoke was curling lazily from her funnel. Terry wondered if Miles Sheridan had come on board. Perhaps he would appear, to greet his friend, and be introduced by Phillips to his yachting companion.

A smart young man dressed as a sailor received the new arrivals at the top of the gang-plank, saluting Phillips as if he recognised and expected him. Phillips spoke of "Miss Divine's baggage," and was assured that it would be attended to.

Terry stood still for a moment, admiring the whiteness of the deck under its wooden canopy and glancing at a few sailors who seemed immensely busy about something she didn't understand. She wished that Mr. Phillips would mention the absentee, but he did not.

"I'll take you below," he offered, "and we'll find Mrs. Harkness. She'll look after you while you're on board, and I think you'll find her efficient in most ways

—though probably you'll have to do your own hair. I'm afraid Mrs. Harkness' skill won't run to that!"

"I've always done my own hair," Terry calmly explained.

Phillips looked surprised. "So much the better. It seems you can be useful as well as ornamental! In that case Mrs. Harkness will be equal to most emergencies. She used to be Sheridan's nurse when he was a small boy, and was pensioned off by his guardians when he outgrew her, till a few years ago when he bought this yacht and called on her services again in a different way."

There was a room fitted up like a drawing-room, on a level with the deck, and Terry's heart jumped as she recognised several old pieces of furniture, pictures and mirrors from Silverwood, the dear place of her first memories. She would have liked to stop and examine them, but Phillips seemed anxious to finish off his duties as *cicerone*. As he guided her down the companion-way she had a glimpse of the dining-saloon. There were flowers on a round table that glittered with glass and silver, and Terry had a faint, delicious sense of suffocation as she thought of herself sitting there with *him*. Excitement grew within her, and mounted to her head like wine. Julia had said that Sheridan "wouldn't trouble" her, and that she wouldn't see much of him, but of course they'd have their meals together.

"Mrs. Harkness!" Phillips called; and then more loudly—"Mrs. Harkness!"

For a moment he and Terry stood in a white corridor which the girl had not learned to call a gangway; then a short, squarely-built old woman dressed in dark blue with a white cap and apron, came round a corner aft.

"Here's Miss Divine," Phillips said in a distinct tone, as if for ears slightly deaf. "You've been told to expect her and have her cabin ready, of course?"

"Yes, sir," replied the woman, with a suspicion of Irish brogue, and looked straight at Terry with a stern, disconcerting look.

She had heavy black brows, which almost met in a straight line across a broad nose, and a thick stubble of black lashes out of which blazed light brown eyes. White hair streaked with black was pulled tightly back from a low, rather narrow forehead, and crowned with an old-fashioned mob cap. She had a firm jaw; and the mouth, with its long upper lip, was shut like a trap as she gazed at the smartly dressed girl in navy blue serge.

Terry's heart sank. Nobody had ever looked at her so relentlessly, not even Father in one of his rages. She tried to hope that it was only the expression of the woman's somewhat rugged features, and that it meant no personal feeling against herself. Why *should* Mrs. Harkness dislike her? There was no reason, and it couldn't be true: so she smiled with a yearning to win kindness.

"I wonder if you are Irish, Mrs. Harkness?" she said. "I am—half. My father's Irish."

"Yes, I am Irish, Miss. Or do you prefer I should call you Madam?" was the reply, without a sign of an answering smile.

Terry blushed. "Oh, no, I'm not—not 'Madam,'" she exclaimed: then recalled hotly that Juliet had been "Madam" to Emmeline, and hoped that she had made no bad blunder.

"Well, I'd better bid you good-bye and wish you good luck, Miss Divine," said Phillips. "I must have a look

round for Sheridan, if he's come on board—as I expect he has by this time. You're supposed to sail in about half an hour."

He hadn't especially meant to shake hands with the Million Dollar Doll, but somehow he found himself doing it: and though she deserved no sympathy he couldn't help feeling a qualm of compassion for the creature left to the untender mercies of that old puritan, Mrs. Harkness. Between the Ulster woman and Miles Sheridan in his present hunted-animal mood, the girl stood to have a pretty hard time on board "Silverwood." She was going to be paid high wages, but, on the whole, Phillips thought she would earn them!

"I daresay you will wish to see your cabin, *Miss.*" The old woman roused Terry from her wistful longing to keep Phillips—by almost any excuse—Phillips the late enemy, who now seemed the only friend!

The girl wondered why she had ever been angry with him or thought him insulting. He was really quite kind.

"Miss" from the lips of Mrs. Harkness was almost a serpent hiss. But maybe it was only because of the emphasis, after being told not to say "Madam." There was nothing in the words to offend, and Terry answered as cheerfully as she could.

The girl had not known that a cabin on a yacht could be so luxurious, and so like a pretty room in a house. There was a charming bed, like a divan, with an embroidered coverlet and many cushions. The chairs and window-bench were covered with rose-patterned white chintz, and the window had curtains of the same. Terry liked the snug, simple little room better than the splendid one where she had slept in Julia's apartment. There was a bath adjoining, just as there had

been at Julia's; and to the convent-bred girl, brought up to bathe in a thick chemise (lest her guardian angel should see her naked) the porcelain tub was a relief after the transparent glass gorgeousness at Julia's.

"What a darling room!" she exclaimed. "I didn't think there could be anything so nice on shipboard. I shall love it!"

"It is well you are pleased, Miss," said Mrs. Harkness, stiffly. Then added, for the honour of the yacht: "Of course, Mrs. Sheridan's cabin—that is, the one she used at one time—is much finer, as it was fitted up especially for her. But it is closed at present; and yours is the next best."

Terry had no wish to occupy quarters designed for Betty Sheen, and felt in no sense ill-used because they were not given to her: but under the decent politeness of the woman's tone was a righteous contempt which even she was not too inexperienced to detect. Terry was not angry, however; she was only hurt and sad, as she had been at the convent if rebuked for some fault she had not committed. Naturally Mrs. Harkness was shocked, just as the nuns would be, because she had come on board to go on a trip alone with Mr. Sheridan. Terry hated to be looked at and treated so severely, and she wished Mrs. Harkness could know that she was here for Mr. Sheridan's own sake. But the truth was impossible to explain. She must just try to win some kindness as time went on, by behaving very nicely.

"If there is anything you want me to do for you, Miss, you have only to touch that bell," and Mrs. Harkness indicated one of several electric buttons on the white wall. "If there is nothing you require now, I will leave you till your luggage comes down. I shall be pleased to unpack for you, whenever you wish."

"Thank you very much!" Terry tried to put cordiality into her voice, but she was promptly snubbed with all due respect. No thanks were needed, said Miles Sheridan's old nurse. She was obeying her master's orders, and would continue so to do without fail, she hoped, during the voyage.

Terry longed to go on deck again, but had been too completely subdued by Mrs. Harkness to dare leave her cabin. She reflected that perhaps Mr. Sheridan was up there with Mr. Phillips, saying good-bye. She had better not run the risk of interrupting them. Probably Mr. Sheridan preferred meeting her for the first time when his friend had gone; and she would be sure to see him at luncheon. The very thought set heart and veins throbbing. She could not keep quiet.

While she glanced at the books—half of them French novels—on the shelves above a little writing desk, her two trunks and suitcase and dressing-bag (all legacies from Julia) were brought down by a couple of men. Nothing would have induced the girl to ring for Mrs. Harkness, and she was unpacking when a ferocious steam whistle startled her nerves. Again it roared, and again. Then the yacht trembled like a live thing, and began to move. For better or worse, they were off!

There was a big wardrobe with mirror doors, built into an end wall of the cabin, and Terry had stowed the last of her belongings away when a knock sounded at her door. A sleek man in a white jacket announced that luncheon was served. Terry had read books about sea voyages, and thought that bugles summoned the passengers to meals: but that was evidently not the custom on board "Silverwood."

She glanced almost timidly into the mirror, her heart pounding. Now—*now* she was going to see him! . . .

No matter how kind he was—of course he would be kind!—she must not let him guess that he had ever seen or heard of her before, under another name than Juliet Divine.

She knew where the dining-saloon was and went to it. No one was there, except a white-jacketed steward who stood behind the chair evidently meant for her. To the girl's surprise there was but one place laid at the table—quite a large table, big enough for four. She glanced swiftly at the one other table in the room. It was of the same size, but no places were laid. It was decorated only with a large bowl of flowers.

Terry had worked hard and fast at unpacking, and the work had made her youthfully hungry—so hungry that she had felt ashamed. As the steward showed her a *menu,* however, she found that the thought of food had become repulsive. Still she must eat; and scarcely looking at the elaborate list, she chose one or two dishes at random.

"What kind of wine will you have, Madam?" enquired the steward, indicating the two or three brands on the card. "Claret, Hock, Champagne? We have got outside the three mile limit."

"No wine, thank you," replied Terry. "I shan't want any, ever. You see, I've never even tasted it."

"Very good, Madam," returned the man, whose name was Roberts—statue-like in his indifference. But within, he boiled with interest in the young woman and the situation.

He and his companions had been told no more than that Mr. Sheridan would have one guest on his Mediterranean cruise; but on a yacht rumour runs as in an Indian bazaar. Mrs. Harkness' face alone would have been enough to betray the fact that Something Out-

rageous was going on. Here was the Something. There was no doubt of that fact. Yet it said that it had never tasted wine!

Roberts was looking forward with interest to the voyage.

Terry took coffee, but refused cigarettes, again to Roberts' silent surprise. She wished to ask if Mr. Sheridan was not well, as he hadn't lunched, and the words got as far as her lips, but no further. She bit them back, instinct bidding her not to question a servant; still, she couldn't settle down to spending the afternoon in her cabin. Perhaps she ought not to go on deck until she'd had some message of welcome from Sheridan? But the temptation was great. She slipped into her coat, and ran up the brass-studded steps of the companion-way.

Out on deck a sweet wind was blowing. Pulling Julia's dark blue Tam well down over her hair, she started to walk forward. Past the saloon she went, with a glance at the waving curtains. Beyond were more windows with curtains of a different sort. They were not drawn across, or they had blown apart; and without consciously meaning to look, Terry saw a man seated at a table, eating luncheon. His back was turned to her, but she knew whose was the smooth black hair with a faint ripple in it. Miles Sheridan was lunching up here alone, because he wanted to avoid her.

XVII

TERRY did not go on deck again while the light held.

"Silverwood" had begun to rock gently in the swell of the great waters where the path to Europe lay; but Terry did not mind that. She imagined that the motion and the thought of romance that made music in it might have been exhilarating if she had not felt sad and "snubbed." As it was, she had not the heart to walk past the windows which were doubtless those of Sheridan's private suite. How would she feel, if she saw the curtains drawn to save him from seeing *her,* to prevent her from seeing *him?*

Her own cabin was like a little boudoir as well as a bedroom, and the girl might have amused herself for hours in writing letters—if there had been any one to whom she could write. But there was no one. She couldn't tell any of the nuns, or the girls at school about this trip, this great and sweet adventure, which belonged really to Julia, not to her. She didn't care to write to Father and he wouldn't care for a letter. Julia had forbidden letters to her during the cruise "because you *never* know!" Manoel might perhaps open the letter. As for Emmeline, she had been kind, but she was a servant: besides, Terry wasn't sure whether she liked Emmeline or not. The mulatto woman said queer things sometimes. Terry didn't understand them fully, but she had felt that they were "somehow horrid."

There were all those French novels to read in the cabin! The girl was in a mood too restless to concen-

trate easily; still, the books would improve her French. She curled up on the cushioned seat under the window, and took a volume which ought to interest her particularly, because it seemed to be about life on a yacht. She began it, was charmed, then puzzled, then—she hardly knew what, except that she felt a little sick.

"It's a bad, disgusting book!" the girl told herself aloud. And the thought flashed into her head that if things went on as they had gone to-day she would have to do a great deal of talking to herself.

For a while she sat very still, thinking about the book that was so sickening and hateful. Who had put it in her room? she wondered. Had it been placed there especially for *her,* because she was supposed to like such books? Surely Mr. Sheridan wouldn't have done it! But if not he, who could it be? Nobody but that cross old woman who hated her so much.

Terry jumped up, took another French novel from the shelves, turned over the pages, and saw more things about weird women and men who thought the first thing to do when you married was to go and love somebody else, not your own wife or husband.

There were seven or eight of these yellow paper-covered volumes, each of which seemed at a hasty glance to be worse than the others. Terry threw them all on the floor in a heap, leaving on the shelves only books of poetry and travel.

"If they were mine, I'd pitch the whole lot overboard!" Terry said, speaking aloud again; and then started guiltily when a knock came as if in answer to her words.

The girl opened the door, and saw Mrs. Harkness, respectful, respectable, and forbidding. "For you, Miss, from Mr. Sheridan," the old woman announced,

holding out a little silver tray on which lay a large white envelope.

Terry took the letter with a beating heart, a murmured "Thank you." Mrs. Harkness would have moved stolidly away, but the girl stopped her. "Oh, please wait," she exclaimed. "There may be an answer."

"I understood that there was no immediate answer, but I may be mistaken. I will wait of course, Miss, if you desire me to do so." The pillar of respectability stationed itself stiffly in the doorway.

Terry's deadly boredom was lit suddenly into excitement.

The envelope was addressed to "Miss Juliet Divine." It had a coquettish little coloured flag on it, and the name of the yacht. It looked as if there were a *very* fat letter inside—as if Miles Sheridan had written to her on pages and pages of paper—or rather, to Julia.

The first letter from her Prince—perhaps the only letter she would ever receive from him! She couldn't bear to desecrate the envelope by tearing it, but snatching up a slim paper-knife from the desk, she slit the thick paper straight across the top. Then she pulled out a sheet folded over something compact and fat. Why, the stuff was money—quantities of money!

Her cheeks burning, Terry read the few lines written in the same clear, small handwriting as that on the envelope.

"Madam:

"Please find enclosed the sum of ten thousand dollars, to be paid to you according to verbal understanding, on the day of your coming aboard 'Silverwood.' According to this same understanding, you will receive a

similar amount in bank notes at the close of the cruise. A receipt written at your leisure will oblige,

"Yours faithfully,

"Miles Sheridan."

A wave of strong young rage swept Terry Desmond like a flame. After all, she was not her red-haired father's red-haired daughter for nothing. She had said that she would accept no money. She felt that she had been betrayed by Julia and insulted by Miles Sheridan.

Standing before the desk, her back had been half turned to Mrs. Harkness. Now she whirled upon the dour Ulster woman, her eyes dark, her cheeks red with fury. "A young demon!" thought Sheridan's old nurse as, without even counting them, Terry dashed the notes on the floor with the French novels.

"*That's* my answer!" she cried. "Tell Mr. Sheridan I won't have his money. Take it back to him and take him those books, too. They're disgusting."

Rage melted to grief. With a choked sob, the demon flung itself on the divan-bed. No more sounds came, but the astonished eyes of Mrs. Harkness saw the slim shoulders heave, and the bright head burrow itself deep between the cushions.

Seldom had the Irishwoman been so dumbfounded. The shameless hussy was refusing the price of her shame—or rather, what her shame *would* have been if Mr. Miles was the low sort the world was going to think him. And the likes of *her,* the little baggage, to talk about "disgusting books," when they'd been brought aboard for her on purpose, by Mr. Phillips! *He* ought to know what the spalpeen's taste was!

Mrs. Harkness hesitated, not sure what she ought to do. It went against her tidy soul to leave that mass of

money lying on the floor, to say nothing of the books. If she simply turned and shut the door in a dignified way which would teach the young shrew her place, why, the monkey might up and burn the bills out of spite, when her back was turned.

The thought of this risk was too much. The old woman bent painfully down, collected the bank notes (consisting of ten one thousand dollar bills), thrust them into the large pocket of her dress, and proceeded scornfully to gather together eight yellow-covered French novels.

As she retrieved these, Mrs. Harkness reminded herself of the books' arrival. Her beloved master had walked on board and broken the news to her that there would be a young woman, Miss Juliet Divine, with them during the whole Mediterranean cruise, and that she—*she,* his old nurse, would have to wait upon her! Mrs. Harkness had once seen a picture in some newspaper (not a Sunday supplement; she didn't approve of Sunday papers) representing this Juliet Divine person in tights and very little else; the leader of the "Water Lily Girls" in the Midnight Frolickers. Mrs. Harkness had remembered the name because it had struck her on sight as being sacrilegious that a dancer in a theatre should dare call herself "Divine."

"Oh, sir, an *actress* along with you on the yacht!" she had protested, as old nurses have—or think they have—the right to protest.

Then Mr. Miles had laughed—not one of his old pleasant, merry laughs—and said, "Not so much of an actress as need worry you, Harky. Just a sort of Show Girl, if you know what that is, or if you don't I'll tell you: a girl who makes a mechanical doll of herself on the stage now and then, as an advertisement of her face

and figure, so people shan't forget she exists and knows how to wear diamonds. That's what I'm having her on board for: as a Show Girl, an advertisement. You know enough about my affairs, Harky, to guess the rest without my having to explain any further."

Harky did know, and could guess. She *hated* Betty Sheridan! She would have liked to wring her neck, and would stoically have gone to the chair for it. And when Mr. Miles went on to say that, if she was too virtuous to take care of Miss Divine, he'd have to let his guest bring a strange maid on board, Harky agreed to do everything necessary with outward politeness and respect. It was only when she broke down and wept a little because of the trouble come upon her own dear boy, and the bitter way he was taking to end it, that he comforted her in one respect. He hadn't, he assured her, the slightest personal interest in Miss Divine, and didn't intend to bother himself with the girl except in port, when a certain amount of acting had to be done in public, to make the whole business worth while.

The next thing that happened was a call made on board "Silverwood," by Mr. Phillips, of whom Mrs. Harkness secretly disapproved, regarding him as a worldly, cynical man, who had no good influence over Mr. Miles! He had come nosing around, to suggest the right cabin for Miss Divine, and had brought a parcel of novels which Harky had overheard him say that "her sort was sure to like." He had learned that the girl prided herself on a knowledge of French. Here was her chance to air it! These books would keep the young person from being so bored that she'd get into mischief.

Then, if not before, Harky had realised to the full, and bitterly, the sort of woman she had to "maid." A

"Show Girl" who'd name herself "Divine" and wear tights on beaches and in theatres must be pretty bad, but one who could only be kept out of mischief by having a lot of low French novels to read, was a *wicked wench*. Not that Mrs. Harkness could read a word of French herself, but she hadn't lived to be sixty years old for nothing. She knew that all French people (before the war though of course not since) and all French novels before and after and forever, were peculiarly debased.

Now, here was the girl throwing these books on the floor, disclaiming them, and refusing to accept what could only be called her wages!

Mrs. Harkness would have liked to say something, but she didn't know what to say. She had, under her sternly conscientious skin and thicker outer coverings, the heart of a universal mother. She loved and yearned over lonely young creatures, and could hardly resist them when they were in sorrow. This was a bad, very bad girl: shameless! Yes, that was the word to use for her, but to see those slim little shoulders—shoulders of a child, almost—shake with sobs, and to think of the wretch's loneliness with no one to like her on board, made the old woman's heart "turn in her breast."

She went out quickly lest she should be weak enough to waste some word of sympathy on the worthless one; and bursting with her news she made straight for her master's quarters—the suite on the deck above, which lately he had taken for his own.

"You told me there'd be no answer at present to the message you sent, Mr. Miles," the old woman reminded him, when she had knocked. "But the young Madam who prefers me to call her 'Miss' wished me to wait; and there *is* an answer after all."

"Oh, very well," returned Sheridan indifferently. "Put it on the desk, Harky." He scarcely looked up, for he was engaged in reading a formidable heap of letters and telegrams which had arrived for him just before "Silverwood" sailed. When Mrs. Harkness began piling a number of French novels on his desk, however, his attention was attracted. "For Heaven's sake what are all those?" he wanted to know.

"The Madam said they were 'disgusting,' and flung them on the floor," Harky informed her master with relish.

He looked surprised, then burst out laughing. "I daresay she's right," he said. "But I shan't be able to judge for myself, for I've no intention of reading them. Is that all the 'answer' she sent?"

"Indeed and it is not all, Mr. Miles," replied the old woman. "Here is the rest." And she laid on the desk the ten one thousand dollar notes which Sheridan had enclosed in the envelope addressed to Miss Divine. "Madam sent these back. At least, she throwed them on the floor with the French books. And the message was, she won't take your money."

"The devil she won't!" ejaculated Sheridan. He stared at the notes, bewildered. "Did she say she'd expected more—or—anything of that kind?"

"Not another word did she speak at all, sir. When she'd throwed the books and the money on the floor, the next thing it was herself she throwed—on the bed. And with that she burst out crying."

"Doesn't like her quarters, perhaps," mumbled Sheridan. "Or she's annoyed because she doesn't find a noisy lot of people to jazz with. All the same she ought to have understood what she was in for. Well, it's too late for tantrums now! We're off and away. But I

suppose I must write to her again sooner or later—or see her. Dashed bore!"

. . . . . .

That night there was a moon. After her lonely dinner (which she would have refused to eat if that wouldn't have seemed like childish spite) Terry decided to try another stroll on deck. She could not live forever below. She'd stifle! And perhaps Mr. Sheridan's curtains might be closed. She determined to risk it. But there was no quick beating of the heart now, in the prospect of a wonderful adventure. There was a weight in her breast, heavy to carry about as a load of lead.

XVIII

THE light of the moon was so brilliant that it seemed to dissolve the stars; and as the long waves rose they dug round their own silver hills deep valleys of black shadow.

Terry, swaying like a blown reed to the motion of the yacht, passed the danger-zone of lighted windows swiftly, and made for the bow. It was there she came upon Sheridan face to face. He had been leaning on the rail, smoking a cigarette, and staring down at the great diamond-plume of spray pinned to the bowsprit. The faint tap of heels brought him back from many miles away. He straightened up, saw the girl, realised that it was too late to escape with decent dignity, and stood still, as a soldier would stand to be shot.

She saw him as he moved, and stopped. She would have wheeled instantly, and taken herself out of his way, but the moonlight shone on his face, and carved it in ivory. Hers was in shadow, yet she seemed to look into his eyes, and they held her for an instant.

Often she had wondered about her fairy Prince of kindness. Was he still the same, or had he grown older? Oh, she hoped not *fat!*

He was not fat. Far from it. He was slim and straight, just as he had been those years ago: rather tall, yet not so many inches taller perhaps, than she had grown to be. Moonlight accentuated the line of his straight black brows, and made the eyes which she remembered as grey look dark. Maybe the face, once brown as a gipsy's, was still brown, but under the

moon it had paled. The eyes seemed deep-set; the clear line of the nose was haughty and hard; lips and jaw had hardened too, as men's lips and jaws had been hardened in the war. All the boyish eagerness, the gay, brave look of rushing forward to meet life, was gone. Terry remembered his smile as he said, "Hello, are you Cinderella?" You couldn't easily picture that face smiling now as it had smiled then.

"Don't go away, Miss Divine," he said, tossing his cigarette overboard.

Terry wavered; and one cannot waver safely on a yacht in motion, before one has thoroughly got one's sea legs. A heave of the deck caught her unawares, and she would have fallen against the rail if Sheridan hadn't moved quickly to steady her.

"Thank you!" she stammered. "I—I thought that here I shouldn't disturb—any one."

"You're not disturbing me; as it happens," Sheridan said with some slight stiffness, as if not wishing the girl to make too much of his words, "I should like to speak to you. If you don't mind, it might as well be now. If we go amidship, there'll be deck chairs, and you can sit down. There's a bit of a roll on to-night."

Terry didn't answer. She felt completely tongue-tied, as she had felt sometimes at the convent when the "Etiquette Sister" suddenly bade her imagine herself at a dinner party, and "make pleasant conversation."

She walked beside Sheridan to a sheltered spot where several long chairs were placed. He indicated one, and she sat down, but he did not follow suit. He stood with his back against the rail, his arms folded. Now, the moon touched her face, and left his in shadow.

It was the first real chance he had had of seeing his guest, really. Not that he wanted such a chance! In-

deed, the last thing he wished was to see the girl; and when she passed his windows while he lunched, he had not turned his head for the fraction of a glance. But it was impossible to stand squarely and open-eyed in front of a person, talking, without observing that person's face; and Sheridan couldn't avoid being struck by Juliet Divine's appearance of extreme youth.

Only an appearance it was, of course! Not frequenting her world he had never met the woman, and so far as he remembered had never seen one of the revues in which she occasionally figured as a Show Girl. Still, he had heard of her at various times. He recalled the furore she had made years ago as "The Million Dollar Doll," in some roof-garden extravagance or other; and that was so long ago that she must be well over twenty-five.

After years of knocking about New York, she ought to look as hard as nails, or anyhow as hard as the porcelain of which dolls are formed. Instead the small, lifted face with its delicately pointed chin, was pure and wistfully sweet as a child's. It even reminded him somewhat of a child's face which he had seen only once, but had never quite forgotten: the face of a child who would be—oh, sixteen or seventeen now, perhaps, if she were alive. He hadn't thought of her for years, and felt it a sort of insult to the charming baby thing that he should liken her to this—this professional "vamp"!

He rather expected the young woman to rush into a tactless attempt at cheap conversation. But she did not speak. She sat quite still, with a pair of dark eyes (they looked abnormally large in the moonlight) raised solemnly to his. There was about her an air of waiting, almost of dread, suppressed by an effort of small hands clenched on the chair-arms.

"You sent me some books, by Mrs. Harkness," he said, beginning with the subject of lesser importance.

"I didn't really mean to send them to you, though I may have asked her to take them," the girl defended herself. "I only wanted them out of my room."

"You told Mrs. Harkness they were 'disgusting,' I believe."

"So they were! I'm sorry if it offends you; but I can't help it. I didn't want to keep them in my room."

"It doesn't offend me in the least," Sheridan assured her, with complete indifference. "I'm sorry that my friend Hartley Phillips miscalculated your taste. He seemed to know that you had some acquaintance with the French language. I haven't read the books myself."

"Oh, I felt sure you hadn't, for you would never—" Terry broke out, then stopped with a slight gasp.

Sheridan looked at her in surprise. It was on his lips to ask her to finish her sentence and then explain it. But he remembered in time what Phillips had said of the game she was playing: posing as an ingénue. Evidently she was at that game still. He felt himself in no danger, however, of being taken in.

"There are plenty of novels and books of all sorts in the salon," he mentioned. "You must go there and choose what you like. The room is at your service. Of course I shall never trouble you there. I'm not in much of a mood for sociability and if I shut myself up like Diogenes that mustn't make you feel that you're a prisoner. Phillips warned you no doubt that you wouldn't get any society except your own on this voyage—except when we're in port, and we have to be seen together."

"I didn't know that—that I would even have to eat separately—like a servant," Terry suddenly flared up.

Her nerves had undergone a severe strain. She had been crying a good deal that afternoon, foolishly perhaps, but he had been her idol for so many years, and she meant so nobly by him that her heart was very sore. Now his cold, restrained tone, that would have been rude, if he could have been rude to a woman, hurt her again; and the words burst forth.

"You're too sensitive," Sheridan said with something like a sneer. "Consider yourself rather a—er—queen than a servant. You have your realm on board, and I have mine, that's all. One needn't interfere with the other. But there's a question I really want to ask you, while we're talking, Miss Divine—for we may not happen to come across each other again for some time.

"Why did you send me back the money it was agreed you should receive in bank notes, instead of a cheque, when you came on board my yacht? Did you perhaps expect the whole twenty thousand at once, or—"

"No! No!" Terry dared to break in. "I won't have any money at all. I said so from the first. I—"

"Really!" Sheridan exclaimed. "I don't understand that. Phillips told me you asked twenty thousand dollars for the—expedition; that you named the sum yourself, and that he consented after a discussion: that between you the way of payment was arranged and—"

"It's a mistake!" cried Terry. "I couldn't, *couldn't* take money from you." But even as she spoke, panic overwhelmed her. She was betraying Julia. She was forgetting that *she* was supposed to be Julia!

"Why couldn't you take money from me?" Sheridan asked, unrelenting.

"Because—just because I couldn't," the girl said dully.

Her face showed distress, but of course he didn't be-

lieve in it as genuine emotion. Phillips knew Juliet Divine, slightly at least, and had warned him. There were many moves in the game which these dolls tried to play with men. He didn't pretend to understand the moves, didn't want to understand, but it looked to him as if this doll were bidding for sympathy now. He had none to give such a pampered young person. But he did wonder how she'd kept herself so virginally young!

"If you don't want money, why did you come on board my yacht for this trip, which you must have known wouldn't be amusing?" Sheridan persisted.

Terry did not answer. She bowed her head and looked at her hands—slim, girlish hands with ringless fingers. Julia had left the little sister some rings and told her to wear them, but they seemed unlike her, somehow. She didn't feel at home with them on.

"Won't you tell me the reason?" he catechised her. "I think you'd better."

A moment for reflection; and then she answered, "No."

"You won't! That's rather peculiar. You make me a little uncomfortable, Miss Divine."

"I'm sorry. But I can't help it," the girl said. "Is there anything else you want to ask me, Mr. Sheridan, or shall I go now?"

"Well, you force me to ask one more question. What *do* you want from me if not money?"

Terry drew a deep breath. "That—that's almost the same question, in a different shape, isn't it?"

"Perhaps. But I wish it answered, now. I don't want some fantastic idea sprung upon me later on. Everything's got to be settled without delay. I thought it had been already. Please let me have the truth."

"The truth is, I don't want anything from you at all," Terry said, shamed anger trembling in her voice. "You—you seem to talk as if I were some greedy—*animal!*"

"You are, just that," were the words on Miles Sheridan's tongue, but he kept them there. After the late experience with his wife, which had deeply wounded his pride and honour if not his heart, he'd come to believe that he had lost trust in women. He had told himself lately, that if he never met a so-called "attractive woman" again he would be glad. Yet here he was shut up with one in a floating house and could not get rid of her for weeks! She was the last creature of her sex he would be inclined to trust; but unfortunately he couldn't shake her off permanently by being a brute.

All he could do was to say, coldly, that he had not intended to be rude. Perhaps Miss Divine would change her mind later on, before the cruise ended, and suggest some arrangement agreeable to herself. "Meanwhile," he added, "please go and come as you like, without any fear of disturbing me. You've been abroad, I understand, so you probably know something about life on shipboard, if not on yachts. On board this yacht, we'll manage things much as if 'Silverwood' were a liner ten times her size. We'll take our exercise round the deck, when we feel like it, without noticing each other. We don't need to speak, or even bow and smile as we pass. That's the programme. But if there's anything you want that you haven't got, let me know—by Mrs. Harkness or a steward. You see the programme?"

"I see," Terry echoed. She got up and walked away quickly, lest the moon should glint on the tears in her eyes. She, who never cried!

XIX

MILES SHERIDAN loved the sea. He had a bent for mechanics, and liked to spend an hour or two a day in the engine room. There were men on board, including Yale, the yacht's captain, with whom he enjoyed a chat; and there were plenty of books to read. Though he had organised the cruise for a grim purpose, he was not bored as days drifted into nights and nights into days. He was in a mood that sickened him of the world, and was glad to be away from it, for, though he had never loved Betty as a man loves the One Woman, her betrayal of him had been a blow. He could sit for hours on deck in a long chair, smoking a pipe and gazing in a half dream at the architecture of the waves; distant towers, marble-white on grey-green hills, built against the horizon only to crumble, and be rebuilt again. It was like life, he thought; the stupendous successes and failures, and new successes reared out of ruined hopes as ages came and went.

Sometime the Doll would go by, and if he saw her through the corner of an eye, he would absorb himself in a book. Seldom, however, did she pass his way twice. She seemed to know by instinct when he was on deck, and to choose another time for her walks.

If the girl had accepted her wages and the French novels, Sheridan would have thought of her scarcely at all, except to turn distastefully from the prospect of flaunting himself with her by and by on land. But she had thrown eight French novels and ten thousand dollars on the floor of her cabin; and he could not help

speculating upon her mentality. It intrigued him, too, that a type of these self-indulgent dolls should contrive to keep the figure, face and throat of a seventeen-year-old girl, while a well-bred woman of twenty-seven or twenty-eight—like Betty, couldn't escape the burden of fat, and a double chin, without stern dieting and pouring down of acid medicines prescribed by secret specialists.

This doll, however, touched no wine. So said Mrs. Harkness, having got the information from Roberts, who waited on Miss Divine at table. Sheridan, being told, had remarked, "I'm not interested in Miss Divine's habits, my dear Harky." All the same he was interested: a mere matter of curiosity. And from one or two things the old woman had let drop before this gently administered snub, Miles had gleaned that his ex-nurse was weakening in her disapproval of the young person. Not being a brute, Sheridan was mildly glad. Rather deadly for the wretched girl to be haunted by the graven image Harky could be when her conscience was on the warpath!

It was true; before "Silverwood" had been a week at sea, Mrs. Harkness had succumbed to the charm of the siren.

The taming of the old lioness had been slow, almost imperceptible at first, and had come about through a series of small shocks, little surprises. She had expected that the spoiled hussy would be exacting of her time and patience, but the creature never asked for any service.

How it managed to fasten its frocks, Mrs. Harkness couldn't conceive: but it did fasten them. And it never put upon her the expected indignity of lacing or buttoning its shoes. Instead of leaving its room in a

state of utter disorder, its belongings were so tidily disposed that even half a gale couldn't upset them. Instead of making Harky's head ache with a deluge of rich French perfumes, the spalpeen used no scent at all, except the delicate iris sachet in the padding of its dress hangers.

All this made the Irishwoman admit to herself that these "vamps" were not quite so offensive in their manners as she had imagined. And the thing seemed such a baby! Its eyes were so big and soft, with the look in them of, "Oh, *please* don't be so cross!" Harky could not stiffen herself against that look day after day. Then came the climax when Miss Divine fell down the three last steps of the companionway, going below to her cabin, and wrenched her ankle.

She made no fuss about the affair at all; that was what touched the old woman's heart.

A gale was blowing, and the girl hadn't minded it apparently. She went up on deck to walk as usual, while her stateroom was being "done," but the yacht had suddenly dipped, and the girl had been caught by a wave. Drenched to the skin, she had started below to change, had lost her footing as "Silverwood" gave an unexpected pitch, and had come down with a twisted foot.

Mrs. Harkness had not yet finished the girl's cabin, when the door opened to admit a dripping figure with a very white face.

"A nice mess ye've made of yourself, Miss!" reproached the old woman, who was already on easier terms with her charge than at first. "Ye might have gone overboard by the look of you!"

"Oh, it's nothing much," said Terry, though she had been a good deal startled, and at the moment was feel-

ing sick with the pain in her ankle. "I'll change my things, and be all right again. But I'm afraid my dress must be dried. I'm sorry to make you trouble."

"You're mighty pale," remarked the Irishwoman. "Maybe ye're a bit seasick?"

Terry said no, she was not seasick. Still Mrs. Harkness lingered, and took the drenched dress as it was peeled off. "My gracious, ye've torn the heel from your shoe!" she exclaimed. "And yer ankle is swellin' up. What have you done to yerself?"

"Twisted my ankle a little, that's all," Terry replied. "I don't think it's going to be very bad."

"I do believe you'd never have mentioned if it I hadn't seen for myself!" said Mrs. Harkness.

"Why, no, it wouldn't have been worth while," admitted the girl. "I can bathe it if it gets worse."

But having forced help upon the young person for the first time, and got off her clothes (what a child she was to look at in her little kimono!) the relenting woman brought liniment and lint.

"Good thing it's not a broken bone!" she grumbled, "as we've no proper surgeon on board. Though, for that matter, the master is what you'd call a natural bone setter. He was always that, even as a young boy. Folks used to bring him dogs with broken legs, and birds with broken wings, and he'd mend 'em as good as new! He might have made his livin' that way if he'd the need to make it. But he hasn't, more's the pity, not even with the pictures he paints, which they say are so wonderful, after the new style. As for doctorin', I'm not a bad hand at it meself, for simple things."

Terry neither shrank nor winced under the manipulations of the strong old hands. When her ankle had been bandaged she insisted upon dressing again, and would

have tried her luck on deck once more if Mrs. Harkness hadn't said that it was no weather for lame people, and the master would be angry if he knew she'd run such a risk.

Terry became docile on hearing this. She imagined that Sheridan would be annoyed if she fell overboard, or hurt herself so seriously that she could not go ashore with him when the time came. The trip would in that case have been wasted, and her presence would not have helped him after all. But Mrs. Harkness put it down to sheer, good-child obedience that the girl should submit her will without a struggle. Her gentleness, her courage, her reluctance to make trouble, combined with the necessity to act the nurse for her, softened the last hard edge of the old woman's heart.

She found herself thinking of her charge as "the child," instead of "the creature." She had to remind herself that the girl wasn't what she seemed to prevent her hands from patting and stroking; and she often had to bite back caressing little words that wanted to come. No, the girl simply *could* not be what she seemed! And yet—Mrs. Harkness no longer thought of "the young Madam" as wholly bad.

"The poor lamb must have had a wicked bringin' up," the excuse would come, "with some one more to blame than herself. And, oh, the shame it is! For a prettier and sweeter little thing to look at and talk to I never did see!"

She burned to tell "Mr. Miles" about the accident, and the way the victim had borne it. Once snubbed, twice shy, however; so Harky held her tongue: but for the first time she resented her idol's attitude towards his guest. Unconsciously she ranged herself against him, on the girl's side.

Miles did hear of Miss Divine's double adventure, as it happened, from Captain Yale, a bluff old married man with a grown-up family. From the bridge he had seen the girl overwhelmed by the wave: and enquiring from Mrs. Harkness when he went off watch if "Miss had got a scare," had been told of the sprained ankle.

"Guess that young lady has had a pretty good dose of the sea to-day," he said to his employer. "And I'm afraid she'll have a worse one before morning. We're in for a rip-snorter."

"Silverwood" was a yacht of three thousand tons, but she was a cockleshell on the waves that night. Captain Yale had to put her about, and run from the monstrous force of the head wind. Sea and sky were in a welter. All was black but the livid, clear white of the foam which hung over the ship like the top of a water-spout.

Terry had never dreamed of anything like this. Before the storm rose to its worst pitch, it had astonished and encouraged her to be summoned to dinner as usual. She had not imagined that a meal could be served in such turmoil; but she was not ill, had not even a headache; and awe of the wild din and confusion of waters had made her forget the pain of her ankle. When the summons came she had been expecting every moment that the yacht must turn turtle, so it was with joy that she snatched at an excuse to leave her cabin and see a friendly face like Roberts'.

The face was more friendly than it had ever been, and Mrs. Harkness had been in the act of coming to reassure her about the storm; so there the two met, outside the cabin door. Roberts explained that he was waiting to escort Miss Divine to the dining-saloon; and Mrs. Harkness explained that she would have come before, but had been busy helping Mr. Miles. A sailor

had nearly gone overboard. Luckily Mr. Miles was close by, and had caught him just in time: but the poor boy's arm was broken, and Mr. Miles had set it.

The "fiddles" were on the table, and Terry managed to eat a little food, though distant sounds of smashing china now and then made her nerves jump. Roberts, too, was a born sensationalist, a scaremonger. He told tales of storms he had seen at sea; but this one to-night, he thought, was about "the limit" for such a small craft. He expected she'd weather it, but if things got worse, why, you couldn't tell!

To Terry it seemed as if things *did* get worse each minute. Not only did the yacht lie over on her side as though she could never right herself again, presently to reel onto the other, but the whole sea seemed to lift itself and then pour down over the ship. Yet even that was hardly the worst. Every board creaked and groaned with the repeated strain. The girl could scarcely believe that the yacht might not fall to pieces at any instant, like a cracked egg.

She asked Roberts if she should continue to sit at the table after dinner was over. "I think I'd better not try to get to the saloon," she said, "and it isn't somehow as lonely here as in my own cabin."

The steward encouraged her to stay, and said that he wouldn't be far off if "anything happened."

"You're close to your own stateroom, Miss," he added, "and you know where your life-belt is, if you want it. Not that I really expect you will." And presently he returned, bringing with him a store of old magazines, including several police publications, to enliven her vigil.

But Terry could not read or look at pictures, the danger seemed too like a monstrous, living presence.

She wondered if what she felt were fear; because people could surely not be afraid to die, if they had no one who loved them to live for? She believed in beautiful things beyond this life. Many of her sweetest dreams had been of another world than this. Yet, oh, she was very much afraid that she *was* afraid! She wanted to live on this earth long enough to learn all its sweetnesses. Besides, it would be terrible to be caught and swept away by that merciless, cold sea. Alone, too! If only her prince were not so cruel—if he were kind, and would say, "If you go, I'll be with you," she wouldn't mind half as much. At least, she thought she wouldn't. Then, crash came another wave, and the yacht wallowed in a trough of the sea that was like a narrow valley between high mountains.

XX

A VERSE she had learned at the convent rushed through Terry's brain:

> "There is not much that a man may save
> On the sands of life, in the straits of Time,
> Who swims in sight of the Great Third Wave
> That never a swimmer shall cross or climb."

The Great Third Wave! Perhaps this was it, and all would end.

"Dear God, do make me brave!" she prayed. Then the door opened, and Miles Sheridan appeared, in oil-skin and sou'wester.

"I heard you'd hurt yourself to-day," he said, pausing in the doorway. "You sprained your ankle, didn't you?"

No longer had the girl to strive for courage. She felt no fear at all. Miles had come. He looked almost kind. He was here on purpose to ask how she was. "Oh, no, I didn't sprain my ankle, thank you," she answered cheerfully. "It was only a little wrench. I shall be all right to-morrow."

"Good!" said Sheridan. "This yacht isn't much of a place for invalids—with no doctor on board. I suppose I must be an optimist, not to carry one. We've had one casualty to-day. I'm glad you don't call yourself another! Are you bearing up fairly well through this row?"

"Yes," said Terry. "I—I don't mind much when I'm out here. I felt—a little lonely in my cabin. I

saw a mouse drowned once, in a small trap—sunk in a tub. I dreamed of it afterwards. I'm sure it would have been better for the mouse just to be thrown into the water, if it had to be, without the trap."

"I agree with you," answered Sheridan. He felt a slight stirring of sympathy for the girl, and was pleasantly surprised that she should make light of her accident, instead of exaggerating her sufferings, as women of her type do. He had come below, not because he wished to see Miss Divine or talk with her; but she was after all more or less of a human being: she was handicapped by the mischance of hurting her ankle, whereas this storm was bad enough to try the nerves of any robust person unaccustomed to the sea, and in love with life. He had felt that it would be only decent to reassure her; and Roberts having said that Miss Divine preferred not to go back to her stateroom, Sheridan had expected to find her hysterical.

"You mustn't dwell on the memory of that mouse," he went on.

"I wasn't thinking of it till just before I spoke," said Terry.

"You were thinking of something worse, I daresay."

"A verse in a poem I learned at the convent came into my head," she answered.

"What verse?" Sheridan wanted to know.

Terry repeated it.

"'The Great Third Wave!'" he echoed. "'That never a swimmer shall cross or climb!' One doesn't like to think there's a barrier so formidable that it's useless even to *try* passing over it."

"I think—*you* would try," said the girl, in a small voice, like a child's.

Sheridan came a few steps further into the room. "You think I would, do you?" he asked. "But you know nothing whatever about me, Miss Divine. So how can you form any opinion?"

"I suppose I can't," faltered Terry.

"You made the remark, then, for the pleasure of hearing your own voice in the midst of the storm? I don't quite believe that."

"No. I mayn't know anything about you; but I *have* formed an opinion."

"Ah! I ought to be flattered that you should take the trouble! So you think, if I met the uncrossable Wave in my path, I'd try to cross it?"

"Yes."

"Then what would happen?"

"You—*might* cross it."

"Thank you! You're not a fatalist, evidently. You don't believe that a man's destiny is decided before his birth; as the Arabs say, 'His fate is hung round his own neck.'"

Sheridan hardly expected an answer to this question. He was rather battered by his experiences on deck, and this interlude was amusing him faintly, that was all. The intellectual equipment of a Doll wasn't likely to include ready-made theories upon fate, unless from the palmist or fortune-teller's point of view. But Miss Divine didn't giggle or look vague.

"I wonder if the Arabs don't mean that we make our own fate by the way we act, every day of our lives," she ventured. "Like that, our fate *would* be hung round our own necks, wouldn't it? I used to wonder about that, among lots of other things, when I was at the convent."

"This is the second time you've spoken of a con-

vent," said Sheridan. "Were you at school in a convent?"

Terry flushed. She felt that she'd been indiscreet in referring to her past, and that Julia would be angry.

"Yes, I was," she had to admit.

"And was what you've just said one of the maxims you learned from the nuns?"

"Oh, no. They only taught us to be good. They didn't try to convert us to their religion. They left us to our own."

"Indeed! And what was yours, if I may ask?" Sheridan enquired, with a rising inclination to laugh. The religion of a Juliet Divine—if any—should be a quaint product!

"Why, I—I never heard much about religion at home," Terry confessed. "My father came of a Catholic family. He wasn't a Catholic himself, or anything at all, yet he wouldn't let mother bring me up in her church. I just thought out a religion for myself. You see one felt as if one *had* to do it!—the convent garden was so sweet and quiet—and I'd always loved gardens! The stars looked so near. The sound of the bells was lovely, too, and put thoughts into one's head. I don't believe, though, Mr. Sheridan, that you *really* want to know about my religion. You are only—making a little fun of me."

"I'm not," said Sheridan; and suddenly it had become the truth that he spoke. "I do want to know. This is the sort of night—though I'm pretty sure we're in no great danger—that a man's mind turns to things beyond this world. It would really interest me to know what is the religion you thought out in the

convent garden." (He didn't add, "the religion of a Million Dollar Doll.")

"Why—it's hard to tell in a few words," the girl answered, very shy, yet not wishing to be obstinate and refuse. "I—well, I used to say to myself: 'This world seems so wonderful and beautiful that it must be—a thought of God, or perhaps, in a way, *part* of God.' God must be *everything,* I used to think. There must be God in every leaf and flower—and so, of course, far more in all of *us.* We must be like beads on a string, I thought, with the same thread—that is God—running through us, every one. Or else God is the Great Fire—and we're little sparks of that fire."

Sheridan stared, frowning slightly. The girl was puzzling him a good deal. But he remembered Phillips' several warnings. She was evidently cleverer and far more subtle in her playing of the game than most of the sisterhood.

"If we're all sparks of the Great Fire—that is, if we have an equal share of the God-flame in us, why are some of us so beastly, or so unfortunate, with no hope of bettering ourselves?" he tested her theories.

"Oh, I've thought of that, too," Terry went on, losing self-consciousness in her interest. "Of course, there's the life after this, where everything *must* come right, for those who've tried to be decent. But then, there's the trouble about the bad people! Of course there can't be a hell, like one reads about in the Bible. It can't mean *for ever,* because *we* wouldn't hurt any creatures for ever, no matter what they'd done to us; and God's so much kinder than we are. But it would seem to make things wonderfully *just,* if we came back to this world in a number of lives, to pay for what

we've done wrong, or to go higher because we've done well! At last we'd be ready for a glorious heaven, wouldn't we, when we'd worked everything out here?"

"Where did you read all that?" Sheridan asked sharply.

"Nowhere. It was just in my thoughts."

"Thoughts in a convent garden! Well, they're not bad thoughts to have in any garden. I've no special religion myself. Not that I haven't had my thoughts —and some of them weren't unlike yours. If convent gardens bring thoughts of religion to young girls' minds, I'm glad I sent the prettiest child I ever saw to a convent school. Yes, it must have been a good thing for her! I wonder what she's turned out to be? I've been reminded of her by—" He stopped instantly.

Terry's heart leaped. She had a moment of fright, but it quickly passed. She sat silent for a moment, listening to the roar of the sea and the straining of wood which her talk with Sheridan had made her almost forget.

"Where was your convent?" he flung at her suddenly, perhaps merely for the sake of something to say.

Now the girl was really alarmed. Could he suspect? Julia would be furious if he found out. Perhaps it might even injure Julia a great deal if the trick (yes, it *was* a trick!) should be exposed.

"If you don't mind," she said, softly, "I would rather not tell."

Sheridan chilled instantly. He guessed at once that the fair Juliet Divine had never been schooled in any convent at all! "Certainly you needn't tell me unless you choose," he drily replied. "And I suppose

I should be over-curious again if I asked how long ago you were there."

"Oh, I can tell you that!" Terry began eagerly, then checked herself with another of those blushes which showed up so under the supposed paint and powder. "No," she went on, "I'm afraid I'd better *not* tell that, either."

"Why should a lady give away her age?" laughed Sheridan.

The girl said nothing. She had been afraid to "give herself away" as seventeen, instead of twenty-seven, which was Julia's age.

"Well!" Sheridan exclaimed. "I've stopped below a good deal longer than I meant. I must go back on deck. We're one hand short owing to that accident to-day, and now and then there's something I can do. I had no idea of discussing religion when I came in here—except the religion of courage; but I've seen that you have that. There's nothing of the coward about you."

"I do hope not," responded Terry. "I can't bear cowards, even women. I don't *like* this storm, but if I'm brave, it's only because there's nothing else to *be*."

Sheridan laughed once more, and looked at her with approval in his eyes. She might be a little schemer—certainly *was!* And she might deviate almost absurdly from that high moral code which she had just enunciated; but there was something of the true sportswoman about the creature. She had brains, too. And she was pretty—damned pretty!

He wasn't sure whether it was conducive to the pleasure of the voyage, or necessary for dignity's sake, to continue sending such a girl to Coventry.

"If we weather this night all right, why—we'll see!" Sheridan said to himself. And aloud he added, "If there's any real danger, I'll come to you again. But I don't think there will be. So don't worry."

Then he was gone.

Terry didn't worry. And the memory of those last words was sweet. *He would come for her!*

XXI

IT was strange, how the storm went down.

There came no definite moment at which the pounding of the seas or the screaming of the wind seemed less loud. Yet at last there was a sense of being able to rest. Even the yacht rested. The straining ceased. There was a longer interval between the mountainous waves. Then the waves were not mountains, but high, sloping hills. And soon after midnight Terry went to bed.

The next morning when she met Sheridan on deck he didn't pretend not to see her as before. He even said, with cool politeness, that he was glad her ankle was well enough for her to be out; and after that he talked a little, not suggesting that she should sit in a chair near his chosen one, but showing that she was not, as she had been, a creature to avoid.

The day after that, "Silverwood" made the Azores.

Sheridan did not land with Miss Divine (here were no acquaintances to shock!) but through his messenger, Mrs. Harkness, he offered a boat; and he had spent enough thought upon his guest to suggest that Harky should go with her on shore.

To the girl who had never travelled fifty miles from Oldport until she was seventeen, the romantic islands rising steeply from the sea were enchanted isles. She could hardly believe until she trod the earth of St. Michael's, that beings like herself were the inhabitants: and even then, they were not *really* like herself.

Mrs. Harkness was surprised that she seemed untempted by the flowers, and bright baskets, and little ornaments of dried figwood pith, which dark-eyed Portuguese children teased her to buy. But blushing, and apologising in French (which few of them understood) the girl refused.

"Wouldn't you like to collect some souvenirs, Miss?" the Irishwoman asked. "You know, this is the furthest island group from a continent, of any in the Atlantic Ocean."

Terry admitted that she would like to possess souvenirs—not that she had any home people who would care for them. But she couldn't afford to buy things she didn't need.

This was a new puzzle. Harky had imagined that young ladies like Miss Divine were richer than they ought to be, just as she had pictured them wearing jewels at all hours of the day, and low-necked frocks in the morning. But here was this girl who refused ten thousand dollars, yet was too poor to buy a few odds and ends at the first land they'd touched after a long voyage. She owned jewels, but wore precious few; and she left her smartest clothes hanging in the wardrobe. The old woman could not resist purchasing some small specimens of native work, and pressing them upon Miss Divine after the great peaks rising from a blue sea had turned purple in distance.

Terry hesitated, but seeing that Mrs. Harkness would be hurt if she refused the gifts, she accepted with a childlike joy that touched the woman.

"Well, I suppose you had to prevent your charge from buying up the whole of St. Michael's," Sheridan said to Harky that night—the first time he had voluntarily mentioned his guest.

"Indade I didn't, then," returned his old nurse. "It's my belief the girl hasn't got a red cent."

Sheridan stared, but said nothing. He thought that Harky was being taken in for some minxlike motive, yet the words lingered in his head.

After the storm, however, a change came over Terry's habits, which was noticed not only by Mrs. Harkness, but by Sheridan. She began to appear in the elaborate dresses which, so far, she had left neglected.

Her motive for the change was not far to seek, and the old woman and the young man both read it, in different ways.

"Because I've thrown her a few decent words, she's plucked up hope, and means to try and vamp me," Phillips' warning translated itself in Sheridan's thoughts.

"The poor girl has screwed up a bit of courage, and thinks to make herself smart, after being treated like the dirt under the master's feet," thought Mrs. Harkness.

Terry did want to look pretty in Sheridan's eyes!

Not that there was anything to be gained, for the future; but it would be nice to see him look kindly at her, as if he were pleased. Thus far, even when his words had been kind, his eyes had not. He'd looked at her with a hard stare from under those thick black lashes of his, or he had turned away as if he would rather not look at her at all.

Terry thought it might be different if she showed herself off in the prettiest dresses Julia had given her, instead of sticking to the blue serge in which she had come on board.

And she was right. It was "different."

The slight stirring of respect in Sheridan's heart

after their talk of the convent, and of religion, died and was forgotten. But the approval roused by the girl's courage, added itself to the reluctant admiration dragged from him by her beauty. He found himself thinking about Juliet Divine a good deal, and not in a way that pleased him if he analysed it.

"I don't suppose there's another man of my age who would keep a woman like that at arm's length," he caught himself reflecting one night. "She must despise me for an iceberg. Or perhaps she thinks me one of those sexless brutes who doesn't know a woman from a snow-figure. Not much of a compliment to her, my noble behaviour!"

It was true, the bargain had been tacitly made by word of mouth, through Hartley Phillips, that he wouldn't "trouble" the girl on board "Silverwood." Hartley had said vaguely that she was thinking of marriage, and meant to "quit the White Lights" when she got back to New York.

All the same, it had been Phillips' suggestion, not Juliet's, Sheridan understood, that he was to keep his distance. She had probably agreed, in pique and hurt vanity. Sheridan couldn't help believing from Phillips' hint about the "ingénue game," and from the provoking daintiness of the girl's get-up, that she regretted the bargain; that she deliberately wished to make him forget it.

Sheridan didn't, however, intend to break his word. In fact, he meant to keep the bargain for the sake of his own dignity and his own decency; also because of the advantage his weakness would give the girl.

Still, he thought of her. He could see her, with his eyes shut: delicate pointed face; rather high cheek bones dashed with pink as if a rose had struck the

dazzling skin; red hair that blew into tossed waves and curls; pure, small mouth, that could be passionate; and most haunting of all, eyes, black at night, purple in twilight, green in the sun. They were eyes to lure a man. They ought to be old as sin. But they were not old at all. They were young as the first violets of springtime.

Sheridan realised that he must keep a firm hold on himself when the time came to land at Monaco (as it would soon come) if he didn't want Juliet Divine to laugh at him. He treated her rudely again for a day, but she looked at him in hurt surprise, as if he had boxed her ears, and he relapsed into good manners.

"There's another storm coming up," he said, pausing where the girl stood by the rail. "We'll be in for it towards night, I expect."

Terry was so pleased with his relenting, that she gave him a sweet glance. "I shan't be afraid this time, or think of trapped mice," she smiled. "That is, unless it's worse than before. And I hope it won't be!"

"Were you much afraid before?" Sheridan asked. "You didn't show it, if you were."

"I *tried* not to show it," she said. "I don't think I'm a coward about dying. But to drown! You know what I said about the mouse."

"We won't talk about drowning," said Sheridan. "But if you don't like being alone in a storm, you'd better come and dine with me to-night."

The girl's eyes widened, and her colour rose.

"Do you—mean it?" she stammered. "You're not —joking?"

Sheridan had certainly not meant it the moment before he spoke, and now that he had spoken he called himself a fool—or worse still, a cad. Nevertheless, he

wouldn't go back on his word, even though he knew what would happen if the girl accepted. The thing would be as much her fault as his, but it *would* happen, and he would not be sorry until it was too late.

"Of course I mean it," he said rather roughly. Then he added, "If you're sure you want to come. If you're not more afraid of me than the storm."

For the first time since she had been on board Terry was happy. He didn't dislike her any longer! Though he'd been taking his meals in the little deck suite, just to escape her company, now he actually invited her to dine with him—her Prince! She could have danced for joy. "*Afraid* of you?" she echoed with a soft laugh. "I'm not afraid of you in the least."

"You're not, eh?" Sheridan looked her in the eyes. "Well, I'm a bit afraid of myself. But after all, what does it matter? The siren calls, the mariner answers! It's your wish, then, that the 'bargain' between us should be 'off'?"

"What bargain?" asked Terry. She had forgotten in her rapture.

"The bargain that I was to keep away from you."

"*You* wanted that," Terry reminded him. "I didn't. I—I'd like to be—*friends.*"

"Very well, then. Your blood be on your own head if I lose *my* head a little—in the storm," said Sheridan. "Run away, now. I'm going on watch to relieve Captain Yale. But dinner's at eight. I shall expect you. Or, if it's rough, I'll go below to your cabin and fetch you."

"Oh, do!" cried Terry, and obeying him, ran off, singing.

Sheridan had never heard her sing before. Her voice was sweet: a young mezzo, with contralto notes,

not badly trained for that of an amateur. That convent of hers had turned her out the perfect, super doll, with no accomplishment lacking! Sheridan wondered if the nuns, her instructresses, knew anything about their pupil's career. "She shall sing for me," he said to himself with a kind of fierceness. "All that fuss about not taking the money was bunkum, of course. When she finds that she can't play me for a sucker—that my divorce will part us, not bring us together—Miss Ingénue will show her harpy claws. She'll squeal for her twenty thousand—more if she can get it. And perhaps she may get it—on the strength of the bargain we'll break to-night. But who cares? Why shouldn't I have my money's worth? Why shouldn't I take what she offers—what every soul on earth will believe I've had from the first? Why should I go through the courts for nothing?"

The sea roughened with each moment, but the motion was delicious to Terry. It was giving her the chance of dinner with the Prince!

She had got her sea legs perfectly by this time, and though the yacht rocked so that the girl slid from one side of the cabin to the other, she selected what she meant to wear for the evening, and laid everything on the bed, without awkwardness or a stumble.

So far, during the cruise, she had put on some simple though pretty afternoon frock, when dressing for her lonely dinner; but she determined to grace the feast in Sheridan's deck dining-room by appearing in one of the Monte Carlo gowns.

The one she liked best was a pale, apple-blossom pink (of some thin material whose name the convent-bred girl did not know) draped over gold tissue. There was very little of it, and the nuns would have screamed

at sight of her bare neck and arms, her silk-sheathed legs: but Julia and Emmeline had assured her that *every one* wore such clothes; that anything different was stuffy, old fashioned, and prim.

The dress was lovely! Terry couldn't help admiring herself in the long mirror, when she was ready, up from the little gold slippers with brilliant buckles, to the wreath of diamond laurel-leaves that banded her hair.

It was as she fastened this wreath, arms uplifted, swaying to the pitching of the ship, that a knock came at the door.

XXII

THE storm was not very alarming, after all, and it hadn't occurred to Terry that Sheridan would think it necessary to take her on deck. It must be Mrs. Harkness who tapped! Gaily she called out, "Come in!"

As Sheridan opened the door, he had the picture of a slim girl in pink so pale that it was hard to tell where the flower-textured skin of neck and young bosom melted into semi-transparent ninon. The slender arms were lifted, for a wreath of sparkling leaves was being adjusted; and the vision was repeated at full length, from another angle, in a large mirror.

Just what he would do when he went to Miss Divine's room and offered his escort, Sheridan hadn't planned. He had merely felt the whim to go, and had found no serious reason why he shouldn't indulge it. Seeing her so beautiful, however, and so smiling, he walked into the cabin and shut the door behind him.

Terry was surprised at this move, for it seemed, somehow, utterly unlike Sheridan. She even had a startled idea that it couldn't be the right sort of thing for a man to do without asking permission. Still, the Prince, who had become kind again, *must* know what was proper, and he *being* a prince, could do no wrong!

She quickly fastened the bandeau of laurel leaves, and said, "I'm ready. It's very good of you to call for me. I didn't suppose you would, for it isn't half the storm of last time! I thought when you knocked it would be Mrs. Harkness."

"Mrs. Harkness is giving her patient—the seaman, Jones—some special dose she's concocted," Sheridan announced. "You won't have to go into the open, because I've had the communicating door between the saloon and my suite unlocked for you. All the same it's rather cold. You'd better throw something over your shoulders, as you've got yourself up for a killing."

The girl opened the wardrobe and found an ermine stole. Sheridan watched each movement, and took the wrap as she would have slipped it on. Seeing what he meant to do, she smiled up at him. "This is the first time I've worn a real dinner dress," she said—"I thought maybe you'd like it."

"I do," he answered. Instead of winding round her figure the stole he held in his hands, he bent down and pressed his lips to her neck, just where the little copper-red curls ringed at the nape.

Terry jumped at the touch as if he had fired a revolver behind her back. Whirling to face him, she stared in simple amazement that was like a cold douche to his heated blood. He gave her look for look, however, and a slow smile turned down his lips.

"Why—did you do that?" the girl gasped.

"Why?" Sheridan repeated. "To break the bargain! It was already strained—wasn't it? You've made me realise that my troubles and humiliations haven't frozen my blood after all. That's rather a score for you in a way—if you only knew! Why should this cruise be one long Sunday-school picnic? Ah, take the cash, and let the credit go, nor heed the music of a distant drum!" He flung away the ermine, and caught the girl by her wrists, but she held back, her breath coming fast, her face pale.

"Don't—don't!" she begged. "I can't understand. You're married—you have no right—"

Sheridan laughed. It was too absurd! "Oh, come, haven't you played that game long enough? I think something else would be better fun at present—and as for the future—my dear, pretty girl, there's—nothing doing! Nothing serious. You dared me to break the bargain. I took you at your word. If you think I've no right to steal a kiss, give me one—or sell me one. What's the price?"

He had not let go her wrists. Now he pulled her close. Her eyes blazed into his. "If you kiss me, I'll hate you!" she gasped.

He flung her hands away in a sudden rage against himself and her.

"Go then—damn you!" he said.

Terry staggered back, and caught at a chair. "I wish I *could* go—overboard!" she cried. "I never dreamed you'd be like this. You—you're *wicked.* Your eyes look the way all those *horrid* men's eyes looked. Oh, it makes me sick—like those hateful French books did. I wish I were dead so I could forget."

Sheridan was dumbfounded. The brute that is in every man had sprung out of its cage. Now it backed in again, not cowed, but chilled. "Don't be a fool, Miss Divine," he said sharply. "This isn't a stage. I'm not an audience. You've no need to go overboard or fall dead if you want to get rid of me. This scene is your own fault. You flirted with me—deliberately. You led me on to flirt with you. Well, you've had the consequences. You should have let me alone as I was letting you alone, if I was physically repulsive to you."

Terry, still grasping the chair, her knuckles white,

had caught at a vestige of self-control. Fresh from school, where she had been gently drilled and lectured, only to feel Desmond's harsher rule, she fell under Sheridan's reproaches as if under a spell. She was being scolded by the Prince of her Adoration!

Her quick anger against him was gone. She felt that, in her youth and ignorance of life, she must have misunderstood. It couldn't, just *couldn't* be, that he had suddenly turned into a wild beast as Nazlo had turned, and as other men at the Blue Moon had seemed to turn, always with the same hateful, frightening look in their eyes. The Prince said that she had "dared" him to "break the bargain"; that she had flirted with him, and that now she "had had the consequences." Apparently he thought that he had done nothing at all out of the way, that she ought to have expected the kiss, and that she alone was to blame for it.

"Oh, no!" she exclaimed. "It isn't that at all! You're not repulsive to me, Mr. Sheridan. Don't you see, it was because I respected you so much, I couldn't bear to think you were not good, and that made it so much worse than if you'd been any one else. Oh, you *are* good, of course! Truly, I didn't mean to flirt, or make you flirt. I don't think I know how to flirt, really. I was only glad that you were a little kind. But if I've behaved badly, and this is all my fault, I'm sorry."

A subtle creature, indeed! Sheridan gave her up, as the Sphinx of the White Lights. Yet her voice was so soft, her eyes were so bright with what looked like tears that the fury of the rebuffed male died down. Useless, he thought, to fling in the girl's face his knowledge of her hypocrisy. Let her have the last word, and act the misunderstood ingénue to the end! It

wouldn't hurt him—more than he was hurt already: and that was but in his vanity, when he looked facts in the face.

"I'm afraid I was a bounder to throw the blame on you, Miss Divine," he said. "Your beauty is to blame, where you're concerned. As for me—I lost my head at first, and then my temper. I've been under rather a strain for some weeks past. Not that that's an excuse! There isn't any. I ask your forgiveness for breaking the bargain, the way I did break it. We'll mend it, as best we can."

"Oh, thank you!" responded Terry with gratitude, as if he had made her some beautiful gift. "I'm sure I was hateful! I lose my temper too, sometimes, though I try not—and the nuns used to say I must pray against it. My father has a high temper. I suppose I get mine from him. I hope you'll forgive me."

Sheridan laughed in spite of himself. "This has been a tempest in a teapot!" he said. "A storm within a storm! Listen to the wind and waves. They laugh us down. Of course I've nothing to forgive *you.* It's all the other way round. I ought to have remembered one reason why you accepted this—shall we call it 'job'?—on board my yacht: that my promise of 'hands off' enabled you to accept, although—I think—you're engaged to be married. That's the case, isn't it?"

"No," the girl answered eagerly. "I'm not engaged. I never thought of being engaged. And no one ever proposed to me."

No sooner were the words out than Julia's warning sounded in her ears. She blushed painfully, and gave Sheridan a quick, anxious glance.

"You look as if you'd 'remembered something you had forgotten,'" he suggested, with a smile.

"I did," she confessed.

"Remembered perhaps, the trifling fact that you *are* engaged!"

"I'd rather you wouldn't ask," Terry said.

"Another secret?" Sheridan shrugged. "Like your motive for refusing money, or not telling where your convent is, and so on?"

"Ye-es," she admitted.

He raised his eyebrows. "Not being a psycho-analyst I can't pretend to make you out," he said. The man's blood was cool again now as it had ever been, and he saw himself a blundering fool who ought to be thankful for a narrow escape. He ought, also, to wish sincerely to avoid the girl's society; but somehow it seemed that he didn't quite wish that.

"I suppose after this act you'll prefer that I make my exit, so you can ring the curtain down and rest in your dressing-room," he hinted. "That is, I presume our tête-à-tête dinner is 'off'?"

Terry looked up at him shyly. "I don't know," she answered. "It depends on you. Do you *want* me to dine with you, or would you rather I didn't?"

He felt conscious of wanting her—to his own surprise. It seemed to him that it would be a singularly dull anti-climax to eat alone this night.

"My steward will think it queer if my dinner guest doesn't turn up, after all the special preparations," he fenced with the girl's blunt question. "Not that it matters a da—matters a rap what he thinks! But I shall be pleased, of course, if you care—to overlook—"

"Oh, I *do* care," Terry cut him short, in her anxiety

to "make up." "I'll come, please. Because I know that you won't—won't—"

"I *won't!* You can bank on that," he assured her. "Shall we go, then?" He picked up the ermine stole which he had flung on the floor, as she had flung his ten thousand dollars; and with an almost ostentatious show of courtesy, laid the fur round her shoulders.

It was true: Sheridan's steward, Evans, had made special preparations for the dinner guest, and was inwardly excited by the prospect of her presence. In fact, every one on board was more or less excited over Miss Divine, the "Million Dollar Doll"; and there were stealthy bets as to how long the frigid relations between her and "the Boss" would endure. Evans' hopes of a change, which had risen high on being bidden to prepare dinner for two, fell to zero during the course of the meal. He wasn't even told that he might go when coffee was served! On the contrary, the Boss seemed anxious that he should remain.

"Might a' been a school feast," he grumbled to his pal, Roberts. "The Boss reminded me of a kind uncle treatin' his little niece on a Saturday out of school, and catechisin' her about what she'd learned last week. They talked history and geography—honest Injun they did—and nothin' else worth writin' home about. Gee! If *I'd* been in the Boss's place there'd a been some circus!"

They *had* talked of books.

In sheer curiosity as to her true inwardness, a curiosity which he couldn't suppress, Sheridan "pumped" the girl about what she had read. He told himself that it was asinine to suppose she'd ever read anything; yet she seemed to remember the literature of her school-

days as if she were seventeen instead of seven and twenty. She had loved history, she said, and longed to travel in Europe.

"But you've been more than once, haven't you?" ventured Sheridan.

At this she shut up suddenly, in that odd, secretive way which perhaps she affected (he thought) in order to make him wonder about her, or hide ignorance. In any case, she had the decency to appear interested in such short anecdotes of his own travels as he "trotted out" to keep up the conversation.

True to her alleged "pose" she drank no wine, even refusing cigarettes, though Sheridan imagined she must be wild for a smoke. And when she had gone, he found it impossible to banish her face from his mind.

He lived again through the scene which he (or was it she?) had made in her stateroom. He saw her eyes, bright with fear, then with tears: he heard her insisting, "You *are* good, of course!"

"Good!" He was not good. He wasn't all bad, either, he thought. And he asked himself in words for the first time in years, what manner of man he really was.

XXIII

WHAT was he, then?

Long after he had been left alone, Sheridan sat and smoked, reviewing his own character in relation to his own life.

No, he'd never been a thorough "rotter," taking things all round. But as he looked back he couldn't see that he'd ever done much worth doing. There'd been the war, of course. But that didn't count as a part of normal life.

The one deep love of his past had been for old Mrs. Parmalee, who had taken the place of both his parents.

He'd asked Betty Sheen to marry him because her grandmother wanted him to be the girl's husband. Not that he hadn't admired Betty. She was one of the prettiest girls he knew, and had ways that appealed to a man. Engaging himself to her was no sacrifice: but when he had his accident, and the marriage was put off, there had been a disturbing thrill of relief, repressed with a sense of self-horror.

Perhaps (he told himself the night before his wedding) he was the sort of man to be bored by the thought of marriage; he'd always been so free. There were other men who would have liked to marry Betty, however, and she had flirted with them all till the last minute. Several were good looking and well off. Their admiration gave Betty a becoming background: and it didn't occur to Sheridan till later that not one of those men had half as much money as he had.

Miles and Betty got on well enough after their wedding; as well as most of the married people they knew; but Sheridan began to feel before long that marriage was a deadly institution. When he was younger, he had had vague dreams of romance. But after all, there seemed to be no such thing outside novels and the visions of poets. He'd drifted into moodiness, and the cynical streak in him had developed. Betty's spoiled-child airs of "the only girl" got upon his nerves. From being an easy-going, good-natured young man, he became irritable, even arrogant. He had been glad to get away from Betty, and into the war. War had looked like the Great Adventure—until he was in it. Then the hideousness of the world's slaughter-house sickened his soul. He thought himself a coward sometimes, but pride saved him, and he did well as a soldier. When he sailed back to America some months after the armistice he had a French Croix de Guerre, with two palms, and the American D.S.C. He meant to begin life again with Betty, who had written that she was working for the Red Cross. And Betty was at first more charming to him in manner than she'd been as a bride. It was only when he and Phillips stumbled upon her secret that he learned the truth; how she had loved Paul di Salvano ever since the Italian Prince arrived in America, and how the wish of her life was to marry him: but she dreaded an open scandal for the sake of the future.

Sheridan had always been fastidious. This characteristic—virtue, or fault—had kept him straight in the face of temptation during boyish days; and now the knowledge of his wife's year-long intrigue filled Miles with disgust. His first impulse was to divorce her. But he had promised the angel of his boyhood that he

would "watch over the child, and protect her through thick and thin, no matter what might happen." He had to keep this promise, because it was sacred; and Phillips had helped him find a way to keep it, a way which Betty didn't deserve. He had been keeping it sullenly, however, hating Betty, feeling murderous towards Salvano, loathing himself and despising Juliet Divine. He imagined that what he had gone through, and the thing he'd been forced into doing, had embittered his nature for ever. He had told himself that all joy of youth had gone. He didn't believe in women. He didn't believe much in men, and he seldom thought about God. If the generosity his friends had once praised in him had not been squeezed out of his heart like juice from an orange it was because he valued nothing enough to care whether he kept it, or gave it away. Highly strung, disappointed in himself and others, reckless of the future; this was Miles Sheridan as he saw himself on board his own yacht—the yacht bought to please a woman who had betrayed him.

It was a true enough picture. Morally, spiritually, he had changed for the worse since his marriage; slowly at first, and with a quick slide downhill since he had found Betty out for what she was. Yet, on this night when—in his own judgment—he had fallen to his lowest, the man discovered that interest in the present and future had revived with an odd spurt. He was younger, more alive than for many weeks.

"Sea air," he said. Yet his sub-consciousness knew that there was more in it than sea air. It was not sex only that thrilled to the lure of the girl shut up with him in this floating house. Something mysterious looked out of her eyes, and called to him, and would not be ignored or forgotten. All that night was full of

dreams of her; a girl like her, yet a girl who was not Juliet Divine.

And Terry?

In her cabin again, she flung herself on the bed, without taking off Julia's filmy gown of apple-blossom pink and gold. She felt crushed, and so it did not matter if the frock were crushed too.

The girl wondered how she had been able to get through the evening without breaking down.

"I couldn't have done it," she thought, "unless we'd talked about history and things like that."

But she *had* got through; and she believed that the trembling of her hands and the constant effort to make her voice sound natural had passed unnoticed by Sheridan.

"If I'd guessed what it would be like I shouldn't have dared risk going up to dine with him," she told herself.

She said now, in looking back at what had happened, that she must have been numbed at first by the shock, for after her horror of the change in Sheridan had been turned to self-reproach by his scolding, she had been conscious of no sensation at all. She had forced herself to think that he *could* have meant no wrong; that she had misunderstood, and must atone.

But as she sat opposite to him at dinner, striving to be composed, a voice seemed to shout question after question in her ear. The questions were so loud, so insistent, that often she could scarcely hear through their clamour, what Sheridan was saying; and she was afraid, when she spoke, of answering *them,* instead of replying to him. The effect upon her mind of this confusion was unnerving.

"What does he think of you?" the voice would scream, over the sounds in the room, and the noise of the sea

without. "What does he think of you that he should walk into your cabin and shut the door, and kiss you, and then say the fault is all yours?

"Is that the way good men behave to girls?

"What have you done to him that he shouldn't respect you?

"Is it because you came on board his yacht alone?

"Is it just because you are *you*—or is it because he thinks you're Julia?

"What has Julia done to make him act like that, and look at her like that, though he never knew her, never even saw her before?

"Is it because she is an actress?

"Do men treat all actresses like that?

"Was it even more terrible of you to come on the yacht for this trip with him than you thought it was, or than Julia told you when she said people would misunderstand, and you would have to sacrifice the respect of the world?"

Now, as she lay on her bed reviewing dry-eyed what had passed, the girl saw that there was something very wrong somewhere, either about Sheridan, or Julia, or about herself—or all three. The thing she had done could not be undone. She would not undo it, even if she could, because it was for Sheridan's sake: and in spite of his harshness at first, and worse than harshness at last, he was the Prince. She owed everything to him. But, oh, she was paying! And he was like the rest of the world in not respecting her. She hadn't realised that it would be so with him, as well as others.

And she could not see ahead into the future.

She was afraid, and trembled.

. . . . . .

Sheridan did not meet his guest on the day that fol-

lowed. She was keeping out of his way: he understood that, of course. It would have been a slow-moving brain not to take in that fact. But Sheridan puzzled over the point of view—the real point of view—of such a woman. In spite of trying to push the thought of her out of his head, it crept back again and again. "Why does she think it worth while to go on acting as if she were aggrieved?" he wanted to know. "Why do I feel as if I'd been a brute to her, when I know that these million dollar doll-women appreciate a man only when he *is* a brute?"

He wished that she would walk on deck as usual and give him a chance to throw her a word, as if nothing had happened. If he could see the girl, he would stop thinking about her in this stupid way, that was a mere trick of a brain too highly keyed. But she did not come; and that evening Sheridan said indifferently to Mrs. Harkness, "I suppose your charge—Miss Divine—got through that little squall last night as well as she did the big one. Not upset at all?"

"No, Mr. Miles, she seems pretty well," replied the old woman. "She hasn't been about much, because she wants to rest her ankle a bit before we land at Monaco to-morrow. She's been reading in her cabin a good deal."

At least the girl hadn't given him away to Harky! He could tell by the look in his old nurse's eyes that she'd received no shock. And it would have been a shock if she had had any hint of the scene in Miss Divine's stateroom.

Early in the morning that followed, "Silverwood" glided into the placid green water of Monaco harbour: but Terry had been awake since dawn, gazing out at the distant shores, gleaming rose and mauve and green

like mother-o'-pearl, and mountains that floated in the background, ethereal as grey gauze, against a blue drop-curtain.

Her visions of fairyland had never been more beautiful than this reality, and she was drifting into it with the Prince; so the dreams seemed to have come true. But it was only seeming. The Prince wasn't *her* Prince. He was not even a Prince at all, but a hard, saddened man who despised her, and wanted her merely for the terrible service which was to begin here, at Monaco. Her life near him, on board the yacht, had been no more than a preface leading up to this day and days like it, to come.

She did not know yet what would be expected of her, and she felt a heavy sense of dread and foreboding which was the more poignant because of the scene's beauty. One ought to be happy in a place so exquisite! It was heart-breaking to be sad here.

Terry was dressed, except that she had slipped on her kimono instead of a frock, when Mrs. Harkness brought coffee and toast at eight o'clock.

"Why, you've done your hair and everything, Miss!" exclaimed the old woman. "I'm half an hour sooner than usual, and I thought you'd hardly have had time to be out o' yer bath!"

"I've been awake since six," said the girl. "Something made me jump up, and look out; and there was the most wonderful, rosy land, in the first light of sunrise—like miles of shining opal. And now, that castle on the red rock! It looks as old as the world."

"Quite a poet you are, Miss!" chirped Harky, wondering if she could repeat the description to "Mr. Miles," and prove to him what a nice intelligence this once detested young woman had. "Well, sit down and

have your breakfast while it's hot. I've a message for ye from the Master."

Terry's heart missed a beat. But she sat down and bent her head over the task of pouring coffee so that her face might be hidden in case she had to blush.

"It's only that Mr. Sheridan will be glad if ye'll kindly be ready to go ashore at ten-thirty o'clock. Ye will be lunchin' on land, at Monte Carlo, in a grand restaurant, and strollin' into the Casino and what they call the Sportin' Club, so ye'd best put on one of yer smart frocks. But ye'll be returnin' on board to dress for dinner, and ye'll have the time then fur a bit of a rest before landin' in the evenin' again to dine at the Hôtel de Paris."

"Then I—we—shan't be stopping on shore for the night?" Terry hesitated.

"Heaven forbid, no!" cried Mrs. Harkness. "The scandal's black enough without that, I hope."

The girl looked up, forgetting the need to conceal a blush: and now the blush came before she had time to hide it. Tears filled her eyes, and she bit her lip to keep it from trembling.

Once, the Irishwoman would have rejoiced in such a sign of spiritual mortification, but her heart had triumphed over her head long ago, where "the creature" was concerned. Instead of being glad that she had made the girl flush with shame, she was sorry to hurt her feelings.

"Oh, Miss, my dear!" the impulse carried her away. "I did not mean to give ye pain. It's a sad pity for a sweet-natured young thing to be in the position you are. But if it wasn't *you,* it 'ud sure be some one worse: so it's all to the good for Mr. Miles, as I shall be tellin' his aunt this day."

"His aunt?" echoed Terry, recovering slowly. "Has Mr. Sheridan an aunt at Monte Carlo?"

"Not at Monte Carlo, but Mentone, which is close by," explained Mrs. Harkness. "She's a maiden lady, or Mr. Miles might o' been left to her care when his parents died, instead of Mrs. Parmalee, who was no real relation at all, only by marriage. I can't see Mr. Miles growin' up with Miss Sheridan, however, though she's good as gold; maybe a bit over religious, *he'd* think; and she spends her winters in Mentone. We were here the year before the war, and I went to see Miss Sheridan then. She's sure to get the news about Mr. Miles, and this afternoon while he and you are at Monte Carlo I shall just run over to Mentone and make things right for him with her as best I can."

It seemed to Terry that it would be beyond mortal power to "make things right" for Mr. Sheridan with a religious aunt: and the thought of this lady's shocked horror of her set the girl's ears tingling. Mrs. Harkness had unconsciously helped her to realise, as she had not fully from Julia's words or Sheridan's conduct, how "dreadful" she must be in the eyes of Sheridan's friends and relations. It was Sheridan himself who had shown her what she was in his eyes; a person impossible to respect. It was true, as Julia had warned her. Every one else would feel the same.

She saw herself a scapegoat: but then, she had been brought to Europe for the express purpose of being a scapegoat. Even the picture her looking-glass presently gave her, of a beautiful girl in a perfectly cut white coat-frock and semi-transparent crinoline hat, did not chase away anguish.

Sheridan threw her a glance of approval as they met on deck, but she thought that he also seemed depressed,

even nervous. They landed together at the neat little port, and Sheridan engaged a taxi to take them to the top of the hill. In the Place du Casino they stopped. "We'll get out here and have a walk on the terrace where everybody strolls at this time of day," he said with an air of bravado.

XXIV

ON that mid-November day the Place du Casino at Monte Carlo was at its gayest, for it was the Prince of Monaco's birthday, and the morning sun shone on fluttering flags and tall Venetian masts. The palms in the gardens clapped their green "Fatma" hands; the air smelled of roses and orange blossoms; women in white dresses carried red parasols; nurses in quaint costumes knitted while children played "tag" round the paths; pigeons strutted in the *Place,* their breasts glittering like black opals; the Casino had not long been open for the day's play, and the early gamblers were hurrying in, eager with hope. Every one looked free from care; yet Terry's heart was leaden. She had become a scandalous figure. She had been *hired* to be scandalous! She was on parade, to make people stare and whisper, if they knew Miles Sheridan or had seen Juliet Divine.

If Terry had realised as clearly as now just what it would be like she wondered if she could have consented to this public parade even to save her Prince! Every nerve in her body was taut as she walked at Sheridan's side, tall and slender and almost startlingly beautiful in an embroidered white frock of Julia's. As heads turned to stare at the handsome couple, the girl impulsively pulled her white sunshade down so far that it covered her face. Then she remembered that cowardice was the same as breaking the bargain. She was here to be seen. Oh, how she hated it; *hated* it!

"Come along. This is the way to the terrace," said Miles, rather crossly.

As a matter of fact, he was suffering almost as sharply as she. His nerves too were taut, and he was surprised to realise that his sensitiveness was for the girl as well as for himself, if not more. He writhed—fool that he was!—at the need to expose this young creature who looked so fair, so sweet, even so pure, to vile suspicions. But the whole cruise was planned for this one purpose, and the programme had to be gone through. He tried to keep before his mind the fact that Juliet Divine's purity and sweetness were only on the surface, part of her stock in trade, and that he must not judge her sensitiveness (which by this time in her life was surely non-existent) by his own. She was probably enjoying the sensation she created, after being shut up so long on board a yacht with a man whom she must think a bear with a sore paw.

Forcing himself against his instincts to this point of view in order to make the ordeal bearable, Miles glanced at the girl's profile as she walked by his side. It was downcast, and the one cheek he could see was feverishly red. "She looks like a school-girl who has chuckled over a nasty joke without knowing what it meant and then had it brutally explained to her," was the queer thought that jumped into his head.

He pushed it out again, laughing at himself for a first-class idiot, and reflected as coolly as he could that this was the day of days for the "plan" to work at Monte Carlo.

Hartley Phillips had originally counselled him to put off the Mediterranean trip till later in the year when the "high season" at Monte Carlo and Algiers, or any other fashionable resort where he chose to land,

would be crowded with his and Betty's acquaintances. But, having made up his mind to sacrifice his reputation for his wife's, Sheridan had not the *sang froid* to wait for a "convenient time." He had to plunge into the hateful adventure at once, and get it over, quite as much for his own sake as Betty's. His argument to Phillips had been that there were always people one knew at Monte, and that he could count upon several who would occupy the villas they had taken there as early as November in order to "get their money's worth." It was the same with Algiers. But he had been cleverer than he knew; for he had forgotten about the Prince of Monaco's birthday and the double celebrations, on the 15th and 16th, at Monte Carlo and on Monaco Rock. It was luck to have landed on the 15th, without calculating the date, and finding a crowd like this to spread the tale of Miles Sheridan's shameful conduct. He ought to be glad that things were going so well, instead of feeling a worm!

They turned the corner between the Casino and the Hôtel de Paris, and were on the upper of the two terraces, where the crowd mostly congregates between eleven in the morning and the hour of *déjeuner.* Through the group of palms behind the marble bust of Berlioz they could see the romantic shape of the Rock where Hercules landed, the grey towers of the ancient stronghold of the Grimaldis, and the huge modern bulk of the Prince's Museum. To the left, far away, floated the mountains of Italy, behind and above the olives and pines of green Cap Martin: and straight in front was the sea, so deeply blue that it seemed to have drunk colour from the sky.

On chairs shaded with huge umbrellas, close to the Casino, a number of men and women in summer-like

clothes sat beside little iron tables drinking mineral waters for a "cure." On green benches near the terrace balustrade sat more men and women, gazing out to sea, watching a couple of hydro-aëroplanes, or studying little books of the systems they meant to play at roulette. And along the gravelled promenade—brown in shadow, gold in sun—strolled many more men and women.

Some were young and handsome, and smartly dressed: girls in tennis frocks, men in flannels. There were marvellous middle-aged women, clinging to the ragged edges of their youth with the aid of Poiret or Lucille: middle-aged men, once soldiers or statesmen, now resigned to fate, as their wives' escorts: but the majority were rather dull, dowdy creatures, whose sole mission in life was a burning interest in their own food, luck at play, or other people's millions or scandals.

Every one stared at Sheridan and his companion, and many looked after them when they had passed. Suddenly, from the group of water-drinkers under the sun-umbrellas, a lean figure rose up, and came hurrying forward: the figure of an elderly woman in black, with a tiny Pekinese tucked under one arm.

"Why, *Miles!*" she shrilled. "It *can't* be you!"

Terry glanced at Sheridan. His face flushed. He was not pleased with this meeting. Why not, she wondered, since they were on parade together for all the world to see?

His hat was off, and he stopped with evident reluctance. The girl, in her inexperience, did not know whether she ought to pause also, or walk slowly on. But the decision was snatched from her.

"And of course this is *dear* Betty!" the lady in black

went on, bestowing upon the girl a smile which suggested in a flash a great rush of teeth to the head. A thin, knuckly hand hung with old-fashioned rings reached out for the small, white gloved one carrying Juliet Divine's gold-mesh bag, and shook it so emphatically as to drop the bag on the gravel. Miles stooped to retrieve the glittering thing, and Terry felt that he was glad to stoop just then. It was queer how she began to read thoughts of his! But they were only small thoughts. She could not read the big ones.

"I wouldn't have recognised you, my dear, from the photo Miles sent me when you married, but photos never do us justice, do they? They look *older,* and don't show our colouring," the lady chattered on. "Now do come and sit down, and tell me *all* about yourselves: how you got here, and how long you're going to stay, and everything. I'm ordered by my Mentone doctor to take the Vichy cure, which you know they give at Monte Carlo now, as well as at Vichy itself, so I'm obliged to drive over each morning—though of course *quite* against my principles, as I don't approve of Monte Carlo."

Her stream of words had given Miles time to recover himself, and for Terry to realise that this must be the aunt of whom Mrs. Harkness had spoken. The girl guessed that Sheridan would have preferred to let the lady hear the truth about the situation from Harky, rather than it should burst upon her in this sensational way. Terry's cheeks were no longer red. She had a sensation of physical sickness, and the blood drained from her face to her heart.

"This is not Betty, Aunt Caroline," Miles had at last a chance to explain. "I—"

His aunt did not let him finish. "Oh, my dear boy,

I must apologise," she said. "I'm so near-sighted, and I don't like wearing glasses except when I read. You're on the Riviera by yourself, then, and this young lady is just a friend you have met on the terrace. Now I look at her closely, she's not at all like Betty's photograph, though she's very charming and I should like you to introduce her. If she's an American, I dare say I know some of her people, though I've lived mostly in France and Italy the last few years: my dear little Peke is such a *bad* sea traveller!"

Miles hesitated for a second. When his aunt heard the scandal (she was sure to hear it in a few hours or days) she would be righteously indignant with him for daring to introduce a girl of Juliet Divine's type. But to ignore the request would be a slap in the face for his companion, and strangely he found that he preferred to insult Miss Caroline Sheridan rather than hurt the girl. This was a queer viewpoint. But there it was!

He introduced the two by name. That of Miss Divine conveyed nothing to Miss Sheridan, at the moment.

"Divine—Divine?" she murmured benevolently. "What a beautiful name! So suggestive—so worth living *up* to! And, no doubt, you do. But I'm sure I've never had the pleasure of meeting any members of your family, or I shouldn't have forgotten. May I ask, are your people from Boston—or New York—or perhaps from Washington?"

"I—my father is Irish," the girl answered.

"Ah, is Divine an Irish name, then?" persisted the lady. "That interests me. I make quite a study of names."

"I don't know," Terry had to reply.

"Well, do come and sit down, and we'll talk about it, and about quantities of things," continued Miss Sheridan, in a sprightly way. She was expensively yet dowdily dressed, and Terry could see from her figure that she was fitted into stiff corsets of the old-fashioned kind. Her hat, however, was too young in shape for her fifty-odd years, and her hair was either dyed or a wig. She seemed a curious mixture of intense respectability, and a vain clinging to youth. Once, long ago, a woman had come to the Blue Moon bringing tracts; and though Miss Sheridan was of a different class, she was vaguely of the same type, with her prominent teeth, her thin nose pink-tipped with excitement, and her pale, fanatical blue eyes.

"I'm sorry, Aunt Caroline," Miles objected, when she would have slipped a hand under his arm. "We can't stop now, as I have to show Miss Divine something of Monte this morning, and take her into the Casino. It's late already."

"But, you haven't told me anything about yourself!" squeaked Miss Sheridan. "Where you came from—"

"I've got my yacht in the harbour," he said.

"Ah, that's delightful!" exclaimed his aunt. "Are you coming over to see me at Mentone this afternoon, or shall I bring a couple of friends and pay you a visit on board? I should like to do that, and if you'll ask us to dine, dear boy, we can see the fireworks in honour of the Prince's birthday. That won't be like visiting Monte Carlo *itself,* you know—which I never do, on principle, for mere *pleasure.*"

Miles' face hardened. "I should be glad to entertain you on board 'Silverwood,' dear Aunt Caroline,"

he said, "but for reasons I can't explain now—you're sure to hear very soon—I can't possibly do it. You would be—annoyed with me later if I did."

Miss Sheridan's nose suddenly looked more pointed than before. A queer resemblance to a fox came out, an amiable, yet prying fox. "Why, that sounds very odd—and so disappointing!" she murmured. "Are there people on board whom I know and don't like?"

"It isn't that," Miles said. "Suppose you just take me on faith, and we drop the subject, shall we? I'll try to run over to Mentone and see you before we go."

"*We?*" Miss Sheridan snapped him up. "Who are 'we'? Who are your guests on board the yacht? Surely you can tell me that? I'm certain to find out, anyhow."

"Yes. I just told you that you're certain to find out. This isn't the time to enter into explanations—"

"Ah!" Miss Sheridan sharply cut him short. "I see—I *fear* that I begin to see. I *have* heard rumours. I hope they're not true—that you and Betty have quarrelled? You *would* not have introduced persons on board whom *she* could not know? But I won't force you to discuss these private affairs before a young girl like Miss Divine. We *must* have a talk later." She turned to Terry. "Forgive me, my dear," she said. "I fear I forgot your presence for a moment. Are your parents with you at Monte Carlo?"

"No," said Terry.

"We must go, Aunt Caroline," Miles broke in.

"In a minute—if you must. Do let me have a few words with Miss Divine! I should like you to tell me where you're staying with your people, my dear. It would be pleasant to meet you again."

"I—none of my people are with me," Terry stammered.

Miss Sheridan opened her near-sighted blue eyes. "Your people—not with you? But you're so young! You aren't travelling *alone?*"

"No-o," said the girl.

"Then who is your chaperon, my dear child? I may know—"

Terry glanced up at Miles. Desperation was in his eyes, and a hint of trouble which, if he'd been a woman, she would have thought hysterical. It was the look which a woman has when she knows not whether to laugh or cry. He shrugged his shoulders in response to the question in her glance, and Terry guessed what that shrug meant. "Mr. Sheridan is my chaperon," she answered.

The effect was electrical. "What?" shrieked the lady, starting back. "You don't mean—no, no, you *can't* mean—you're not on his *yacht* with him—*alone?*"

"Yes," the girl said. "Except for Mrs. Harkness. And the Captain. And the crew."

Miss Sheridan's face became very red, then pale, all but the fatal point of the nose. "This is terrible—terrible news for me," she gasped. "I—don't know what to do about it."

"There's nothing to do about it," said Miles. "You *would* have it, you know!"

"My poor dead brother, and sweet dead sister-in-law!" Miss Sheridan moaned. "And your unhappy *wife!* Something *must* be done. Oh!" and she looked at Terry —"my poor, misguided girl! You must be rescued. My nephew must be rescued. You must be saved from each other."

"I don't think we can be," said Miles. "It's too late. You must let us go our way, and forget us."

"That I will not do," answered Miss Sheridan; and without another word of farewell she walked back to her table, and her half-drunk mineral water, a look of exalted resolution on her face.

"That was rather a sickener," the girl heard her companion mumble.

"I—perhaps I ought to tell you, Mrs. Harkness means to go to Mentone, to call on Miss Sheridan this afternoon," Terry ventured, timidly.

"A pity she couldn't have seen my aunt before my aunt saw us," Miles growled. "It would have spared you as well as me a disagreeable quarter hour. We'd better slip into the Casino, I think. We can't go on walking up and down the terrace, passing her each time. I'd rather pass an uncaged lion!"

Terry did not reply. She shrank back then, half stopped, and instinctively laid her hand on Sheridan's arm.

Miles was astonished. A glance at the girl showed him that her sudden emotion was not from illness, or a stumble that had hurt; she had seen a face that startled her.

A tall, dark man was strolling towards them. Sheridan recognised the face. It was that of Eustace Nazlo, known as the "Shoe King."

XXV

IT wasn't surprising that Juliet Divine should know Eustace Nazlo. She was, Sheridan had sharply to remind himself, the sort of girl who *would* know that sort of man. But a wave of resentment swept over him. He wondered if before leaving New York, she had made an appointment with Nazlo at Monaco. He realised that this was probable. His nerves, rasped by the scene with his aunt, were on edge. The girl had no right to arrange flirtations for the trip, and he'd warn her that he would not stand for it!

"You know that man?" his tone made the question an accusation.

"I've met him," Terry answered. She was frightened, more for Julia than for herself. After an instant of shocked surprise, she realised that her start of recognition might inform Nazlo that she wasn't Juliet Divine, who had never met him, but Teresa Desmond, who had. And if he guessed, or even suspected, there would be trouble.

The fear was not unjustified. Nazlo had walked on a few steps, for the thought that sprang into Terry's head developed more slowly in his.

Seeing the tall, beautiful young woman strolling with Miles Sheridan (whom he knew by sight), Nazlo took it for granted at a distance that the man's companion was the "Million Dollar Doll."

His nearest glimpse of Juliet Divine had been from a stage box, or at a night café, craning his neck from one table for a sight of a profile at another. Gossip

about women of her world came to him, however, and he knew of Juliet's most conspicuous adventures. Here was one, which he hadn't heard about! . . . There had been talk of Mrs. Miles Sheridan and an Italian prince. Nazlo deduced, as he approached the pair, that this escapade was tit for tat on Sheridan's part. He heard himself telling men at his clubs when he went back to New York: "By the way, whom do you think I met at Monte?"

As he drew nearer to the couple, he was struck anew by the resemblance between the Million Dollar Doll and the convent girl who had "turned him down." Dress that child in clothes like these, instead of her country-made black, and she'd be just as handsome, just as stunning!

He was sharply pricked by the remembrance of his failure. He hated to fail. He often boasted to himself (he was too intelligent to boast to others) that he had never failed in love or business. The thwarted affair with Terry Desmond had left a sore spot.

Coming closer, the youthfulness of the girl's face impressed him. She looked like a sad and lonely child, detached from home surroundings. Could Juliet Divine look like that?

Of course Juliet had a spurious air of girlishness, and might be taken for twenty instead of twenty-seven. But if her beauty had a defect, it was a certain bright hardness. Her youth wasn't this virginal youth. It was a youth of bold, pioneering experience.

Just as Nazlo's mind touched this conclusion, the tall girl in white saw him, started, and shrank against her companion's shoulder.

"She *isn't* Juliet Divine. She's Teresa Desmond!"

The conviction shot through Nazlo's brain. He

walked on, turning it over, and decided that he had hit the amazing truth. The moment he was sure, he wheeled, and in an instant had joined the couple.

"How do you do, Miss Desmond?" he said, hat in hand. "What a surprise, seeing you here!"

Sheridan had braced himself for this. But he was puzzled by Nazlo's way of address. What did the fellow mean by calling the girl "Miss Desmond"? It must be a slip of the tongue, or else there'd been some adventure in which Juliet had posed as "Miss Desmond." Strange, however, that a man about town like Nazlo hadn't known the Million Dollar Doll! No wonder that she seemed upset at meeting him! There was something under the surface, here: but Miles was surprised at his own sense of relief, and the cooling of his anger against the girl. Taking all things together, it began to look as if there'd been no appointment! He had another surprise also: his sudden wish to shield her.

Terry's quick wit was baffled by lack of experience and her training to be truthful.

"Juliet will be *so* angry if Mr. Sheridan finds out!" she thought. "What can I do?"

She looked up at Sheridan and met his eyes. It seemed to him that he caught an S.O.S. signal, and he responded promptly.

"You are Mr. Nazlo, I think?" he said with cool politeness. "I've seen you now and then in New York. But you have made a mistake. This lady is not Miss Desmond. She doesn't know you."

Nazlo was a man of the world, and his great aim was to reach social heights, climbing on his millions. "I'm sorry," he said civilly. "I beg the lady's pardon—and yours. I must have been deceived by the great likeness between her and a friend of mine—a friend I've lost

sight of, but hope to find again. I know I *shall* some day; and I thought this was the day!"

He lingered, expecting a move on the girl's part, if only a gesture or a faint exclamation, or—almost equally welcome—a sign from Sheridan that a chat with a fellow New Yorker would be acceptable. But the white sunshade screened Teresa Desmond's face, and Sheridan was irresponsive.

Unless Nazlo were ready to risk a snub in public, from one or the other, there was nothing to do except to take himself off. Until he could see what use to make of the situation (he *would* make use of it!) he didn't want a row with the man or girl.

"Again I beg pardon," he excused himself; and lifting his hat once more, turned back in the direction whence he came.

"I hope I did what you wished me to do," said Miles when he could be certain that the Shoe King was out of earshot.

"Yes. And I thank you very much," Terry answered.

This, Sheridan felt, was the moment to drop the subject of Nazlo, but he could not let it go; in the last three or four minutes he had become conscious of a burning interest in Juliet Divine's past. It was morbid as well as foolish. But there it was, like fire in brushwood!

"Yet you say you do know him?" Something within Miles burst forth with the question.

"I met him—twice."

"You didn't like him?"

"No."

"He's very rich."

"I don't care a bit about that!"

The protest seemed so sincere that Miles stared at the downcast profile. He remembered how Juliet had refused his money. Could it be that she meant her refusal to be permanent? If so, why on earth had she come away with him? No character had ever puzzled and intrigued him so much.

"Did Nazlo offend you?" he persisted.

"He—oh, I *hated* him!" the girl broke out.

"Of course I've no right whatever to ask," Miles said, "and you needn't answer unless you like. But I can't help being curious—I don't know why, except that I don't admire Nazlo as much as some men do—I can't help being curious as to—the way he offended you."

"He tried to kiss me, and I was angry," Terry confessed; because, what harm in telling a thing that might have happened to Julia? "Then I ran away. And I never saw him again till to-day. That's why I—was silly when we came on him just now. I suppose I was —a little nervous already after—"

"After the affair of my aunt?"

"Yes. I know it was stupid of me!"

"If it was stupid, I was stupid too. So Nazlo tried the same game I tried the other night? You would have run away from me too, I expect, if you could without jumping into the sea?"

"If I'd run away it would have been for a different reason." The truth slipped out before Terry had time to snatch it back.

"How, different?"

"I hated Mr. Nazlo to kiss me because I disliked him, and felt he was—*horrid*. But with you—I feel—I feel you ought to be very good, too good to—oh, please, I *can't* explain!"

"Don't try," said Sheridan. Just for the moment he

let himself take the girl as she wished to be taken; sweet, sincere. He thrilled with the joy of believing in her, though it could be only a brief play—a tragi-comedy. "Thank you for not classifying Nazlo and me under the same category. I'm glad I helped you out of a scrape—since it was a scrape. I must say I imagined at first that you'd arranged to meet him here. And I was rather cross."

"You must think very bad things of me if you thought that. It's not fair!" Terry said.

"I won't think such thoughts again. But why did the fellow call you 'Miss Desmond'?"

Sheridan looked straight at her as he fired this question, and she was submerged by one of her blushes. "I —was introduced to him by that name," she answered after an instant's hesitation. "But—I don't want to tell you any more, if you don't mind."

"Forgive my impertinent curiosity," Sheridan said. A short time ago he wouldn't have supposed that he could be "impertinent" to Juliet Divine. He loathed all men who had not only tried to kiss her, but had succeeded. The difference between what she seemed, and what she must have been, tortured him, as jealousy tortures a man in love. Yet he was not in love, of course, so could not be jealous.

"Let's go into the Casino," he proposed.

They had turned off the terrace, to come round in front of the big white building which, in the bright sunshine, glittered ornately like a Titanic wedding cake. They walked up the steps together, and Sheridan—who had been to Monte Carlo twice or thrice before—led his companion to the Bureau, for their tickets of admission.

"I suppose you have a visiting card?" he suggested,

taking out one of his own with the name of a famous club upon it.

"No, I've never had any visiting cards," replied Terry. "Must I have one, to get in?"

"It will be all right without," said Miles.

The frock-coated Frenchman whose word was law for aspirants wishing to enter "the Rooms," glanced from one to the other. Like all employees of the Casino, he had a "royal memory," it being part of his job never to forget a face. He remembered seeing Miles Sheridan of New York a year or two before the war, and thought that he recalled a wife—a pretty, blonde girl older than this one, and of a less remarkable type. He understood English, and was amused by the scrap of conversation between the two.

"Madame is the wife of Monsieur Sheridan?" he enquired maliciously.

"No," rapped Miles. "She is Miss Juliet Divine, of New York. She presents herself on my introduction."

"A visiting card with the name is usual for newcomers, Monsieur is aware."

"Don't make difficulties for nothing," Miles said more sharply. "I'm able to identify and vouch for the lady."

"But her age?" persisted the man of the frock coat. "What age has Mademoiselle?"

"Seventeen," answered Terry, off her guard.

"Seventeen!" echoed the Frenchman. "I feared, on looking at Mademoiselle that she was too young. Unfortunately, it is forbidden for persons under twenty-one to be admitted into the *salles de jeu.*"

Sheridan was astonished at the "gaff" the girl had made. Women were generally fools about their age, but this was carrying foolishness too far! She might at

least have acknowledged to being twenty-one; and as she'd travelled about Europe before, she should have remembered this rule at Monte Carlo. Well, they were shut out of the Rooms by her absurdity, but the *contretemps* was funny, and Sheridan laughed in spite of himself.

"That settles that!" he said. "You're too young and innocent to play roulette or trenté et quarante in the Casino, but I expect I shall slip you into the Sporting Club this afternoon without being arrested as a kidnapper."

They walked out, defeated, Sheridan still laughing, Terry ashamed. "How did you happen to pitch on seventeen?" he said.

"I—forgot," she said.

This was a quaint answer; but if she wanted to be seventeen, let her! He felt suddenly lifted out of depression by his own fit of laughter, the first for a long time without a tang of bitterness in it.

As the Casino was forbidden, and the Sporting Club closed till after luncheon, he took his companion to look at the shops in the Galerie Charles Trois. Terry was thrilled by the hats and frocks, the furs and jewellery behind the plate-glass windows, but she seemed almost shocked at Sheridan's offer to buy her anything she liked. "No, I don't really want the things," she said. "And I couldn't let you give them to me."

Strange girl!—strange Million Dollar Doll!

Ciro's was not open. It was too early in the year, so the two lunched at the Hôtel de Paris, on the awninged balcony. There Sheridan saw several acquaintances from New York, who evidently recognised Juliet Divine, and guessed unutterable things. She, however, sat calm and unconcerned, as if she did not know the

faces by sight. Later, at the Sporting Club, there were a number of friends from villas near by, people whom Miles had expected to meet, but now found himself longing to avoid. They talked to him and asked no questions about Juliet Divine, except with their eyes.

"The glad tidings will now be spread!" he thought, all the bitterness pouring back in a flood.

Fighting his distaste at making her conspicuous, he forced himself to show the girl off, by teaching her to play roulette. "Beginner's luck," was hers. She won, and with the conscientious air of a young retriever dog, handed the winnings to her instructor.

"But the money's yours," he insisted, pushing back the bunch of hundred franc notes.

"Really, I can't keep it," Terry said. "You gave me the notes to begin with."

"That doesn't matter. You chose where to stake."

She shook her head. "No, I won't have the money."

Miles frowned. "We can't fight here. But I shall be offended if you refuse to take anything from me, even when it belongs to you by right."

The girl had the look of a scolded child, as she heard the sharp whisper. She separated one note from the rest, and tucked it away in Julia's gold bag. "I'll keep that one, then, just not to offend you," she said. "But you must have the rest."

"I won't!" Miles insisted. "Throw it on the table again."

"I'll put it all on the first dozen," she said, "if you'll promise to keep the winnings."

Curious to see what would happen, Miles consented. "But there won't be any winnings," he added.

The first dozen came up. Terry had won a thousand francs; twice her stake. Gravely she gave the money

to Sheridan, who was obliged to stick to his bargain. He recalled some words of Harky's after the day at the Azores: she had reported that, according to her belief, the girl was penniless.

Terry was very silent, rowing out to the yacht at six o'clock, to dress for dinner, and Sheridan asked if she were tired. "You don't need to come on land again to-night unless you like," he conceded.

"Oh, yes, I'll come," she said. "I'm not really tired; only thinking."

"Of what?" he wanted to know.

"A thousand things!"

But one thing of which she had not thought awaited them. Miss Caroline Sheridan was on board "Silverwood."

XXVI

MILES' love for old Mrs. Parmalee had given him an almost exaggerated sense of what was due to elderly women. It would have been impossible for him to be rude to his aunt, though he was more than annoyed at the liberty she had taken in coming on board after his refusal of an invitation.

She was seated on deck when he arrived with Terry, and squirming up from her low chair, moved forward with the air of one who leads an army to martyrdom.

"Dear Miles," she said, before surprise gave him breath to speak, "you must forgive me. I *had* to come. After a call from your faithful old nurse this afternoon at home, I felt it my duty to visit you at once. There was no time to be lost. I drove over from Mentone, brought Mrs. Harkness back, and insisted upon coming on board, though I knew too well I should not be welcome."

"I told you, Aunt Caroline," Sheridan reminded her, "that it was largely for your own sake I couldn't invite you."

"I am not in the habit of considering myself, when it is a question of Right," Miss Sheridan answered, "and I feel very strongly that it is, in this case. I feel, too, that I have been *sent.*" Her voice dropped. A pair of pale eyes fixed an ardent, meaning gaze first upon her nephew, then upon the girl, who dared not try to escape. "I have *prayed,*" the lady went on; "prayed for *guidance.* Then it was borne in upon me that I must make this effort. Miles, I wish to speak with

Miss Divine *alone.* But before leaving you, I must mention in the presence of *both,* that—I felt it my duty to write to your wife. I advised her—implored her—to join you."

Miles laughed, his least pleasant laugh. "Poor Aunt Caroline!" he exclaimed. "You're a wonderful optimist. Or else Harky, in the conversation you had with her on my affairs, kept her mouth shut like a rat trap."

"She did tell me that I must not imagine you were engaged in—in an ordinary intrigue. That on the other hand, you were sacrificing yourself to protect Betty. But naturally your old nurse is entirely on your side, and seems to have a harsh distrust of your wife which suggests jealousy. I can't help thinking she may be unjust, as an old woman often is to a young one. I have experienced that trouble *myself,* with my elders. And even if Mrs. Harkness is partly right, the situation may still be saved, and a family scandal avoided. I have written most earnestly to Betty, appealing to her *heart* as well as her head. I felt as if my prayers had inspired me, and knowing that if anything could be done at this eleventh hour, only I could do it—"

"Believe me, the eleventh hour and even the twelfth hour have passed," Miles cut in at last, his voice not quite steady. "My wife and I never loved each other as men and women usually do in books and seldom do in real life. If it hadn't been for Mrs. Parmalee's wish, it's not probable that we should have married, so I'm not judging Betty too harshly for loving some one else a good deal better than she ever loved me. It's unfortunate, that's all. And—there were some rather disagreeable circumstances connected with—my learning of her change of mind. Betty wants to make a new life for

herself, and I'm trying to arrange for her to do it, along the line of least resistance. I think I am doing it in the right way. Betty knew, before I started, all about what was going to happen, though of course her knowledge is a secret, otherwise she wouldn't be able to get her divorce, and the whole business would be in vain. She will tear up your letter; and perhaps she'll have a little laugh over your interfer—over your innocence. That will be the only result."

"I don't agree with you, Miles," Miss Sheridan protested, her thin breast, above the high, old-fashioned corsets, rising and falling fast. "No woman *could* read my letter unmoved. Betty will repent—whatever she may have to repent. She will travel to you as quickly as she can. She will beg your forgiveness, and then, I don't doubt, you will beg hers. There is nothing like mutual forgiveness between two people who have—erred, to bring them together again."

Miles' impatience was a rising tide. But he felt a fanatical sincerity in his aunt that won a kind of unwilling respect. "Well, I'll expect Betty when I see her," he said. "Meanwhile, I thank you for your interest, and I know you mean well. There's really nothing more to say on the subject, is there? May I take you back to the shore and see you to a taxi—unless you'll honour Miss Divine and me by dining with us at the Hôtel de Paris at 8.15 or so? I hardly suppose you'd care to do that, but—"

"I have never dined at Monte Carlo, and shall never dine there," said Miss Sheridan. "You may take me on shore later and we can have a little further talk. But I must first have one with Miss Divine. To do that was one of my great objects in coming on board in spite of your prohibition, Miles."

"It is for Miss Divine to decide whether she has time to give you, Aunt Caroline, before she dresses for dinner," Sheridan replied.

"Miss Divine, I cannot think you will rudely refuse a sincere well-wisher?" The elder woman turned to the girl.

"I don't refuse, of course," said Terry, "since Mr. Sheridan says I'm to decide. Where would you like to talk with me?"

"Let it be in the saloon," suggested Miles. "Meanwhile I'll go and dress. I shall be ready in twenty minutes to take you back to the port, Aunt Caroline."

When Miles had gone, Terry showed Miss Sheridan the door of the saloon and stood aside for her to pass in. The moment the girl had crossed the threshold, the inspired visitor turned.

"My poor, unfortunate young woman," she burst forth, "I *know* heaven has sent me to you. You have sinned. You have led an evil life, but God forbid *I* should judge you. I do not. My heart is filled with pity. You may have been led astray when you were not far beyond childhood. Even now you are in your early youth. Reform! reform! This is the moment. I am here to help you."

Terry stiffened. "I have *not* led an evil life!" she almost whispered. "It's not true. Nobody could have told you so. I'm sure Mrs. Harkness wouldn't."

"Your *name* has told me," stated Miss Sheridan. "That is, I had not heard it till to-day. In my world I do *not* hear of yours. But sitting on the terrace after you had gone, I was joined by an American friend who recognised you, after having seen you appear on the stage, and was very much surprised you should be with —ah, we need not go into *that!* What I am here for

is to beg you to leave my nephew at once. He may have treated you as a gentleman should. Mrs. Harkness says he has. I hope she is right. But that is *not* the point. He was most misguided to undertake this expedition. Break with him, I beseech you, before his wife comes to throw herself at his feet."

"I'm sure Mrs. Sheridan would never do anything like that," said Terry.

"I spoke figuratively. For your own sake, my child, if not for hers and my unhappy nephew's, do what I ask."

"I can't leave Mr. Sheridan unless he wishes me to," the girl maintained, all Mary Desmond's quiet obstinacy in her young face, and something of Terence's temper in her eyes.

"He *will* wish it if you tell him it is *your* wish, and best for you," persisted his aunt. "I will find you a kind home in Mentone, till your future can be decided, if you will place yourself in my hands. I will even take you into my *own* home for a time. I am sure our dear chaplain at Mentone will approve the invitation, and he will come and talk with you himself. He will lead you to a new way of life."

"I don't want a new way of life," answered Terry. "I'm not wicked. Indeed, I'm *sure* I'm not—and the name of Juliet Divine can't be as black as you say it is. You must—oh, I know you're Mr. Sheridan's aunt, and I hate to be rude to you, but I shall be, if you don't stop!—I think you must have a *horrid* mind!"

"My mind is full of peace and good will—even to those who despitefully use me," said Miss Sheridan, with a pinched look about the nose. "I pray that yours may be the same. But I am very much afraid from this talk that you are past *my* helping, as you don't

even admit your own sin. I will leave you to hear the still, small voice—as you may yet do. And remember that my offer is open. I am loth to give you up, though, alas, we cannot change a heart without the consent of that heart itself! I will go, and continue to pray for you at home, Miss Divine. But before we part, I *must* tell you what I wrote this afternoon to my nephew's wife in New York. I chose each phrase after reflection, and I described you as an attractive girl, *too* attractive, in appearance and manner. I said that Miles was treating you so chivalrously, and you were trying to create so good an impression on the *personnel* of the yacht (I gathered this from Mrs. Harkness) that it seemed to me your aim for the future was—marriage with him,—nothing less. I warned Betty that a man wasn't likely to behave so well to—to a woman of your world unless some idea of the same sort was in *his* head. Propinquity, I said, in such circumstances, was *most* dangerous. I added that Miles would be lost to her—Betty—for ever unless she hurried in person to the rescue. And my friend who discussed the—the sad affair with me as we sat on the terrace this morning mentioned that she would write to my niece too. She is a worldly woman and I am not, I thank Heaven; and I dare say her point of view will be presented to Betty differently from mine. But her *advice* will be the same. Had you not better be gone before my niece-in-law arrives to join her husband?"

Sheridan opened the door with ostentatious loudness, but neither occupant of the saloon had consciously heard.

"Still harping?" he exclaimed. "I hope Miss Divine won't desert me on your persuasion, Aunt Caroline. I should be in rather a hole if she did. But I don't think she's that sort. I'm dressed and ready to take you on

shore now. In half an hour, Miss Divine, I'll come back for you."

"Very well," Terry said, in a low tone that sounded sullen.

When aunt and nephew were gone, she rushed below to her own cabin, and cried as she had never cried before. It was useless this time to remind herself how silly it was—according to Father—to "squeeze juice out of her face." It would come! There seemed no end to it. How horrible the world was!

XXVII

IF Eustace Nazlo had had his way with Terry Desmond in New York, and all had gone "according to plan," she might have been for him only a pretty little thing in a long line of pretty little things. But she had run away from his love. She'd played him a trick, and he had lost her. He could not bear to be thwarted. It made him feel physically depleted.

Few women had stumbled on this peculiarity of Nazlo's, because few had ever tried to thwart him. Girls who attracted the Shoe King were ready to dance with joy at their luck, and were in consequence too "nice" to him for their own ultimate good. He tired soon of what he got easily; and because a third-rate French dancer from Marseilles was clever enough to guess this, she had contrived to become Mrs. Nazlo, at a time when the Shoe King was scarcely established in his kingdom. The affair had happened in Paris just before the war. It had been a case of "Marry me, or good-bye, and I'll marry some one else." Natalie Coréze had eyes like wells of ink, and red lips that asked for kisses and then refused them. But she was scarcely above the peasant class; and when they had been married for two months Nazlo was sick to death of her. If she had not been going to have a child he would have bribed her heavily to divorce him, but one of the man's rare weaknesses was his intense love of children. He waited. Natalie's baby was a boy, and the miniature image of his father. Nazlo offered the woman five hundred thousand francs (as big a sum as

he could then afford) to give up the child, and return as Mademoiselle Natalie Coréze to her native Marseilles. But what was Nazlo's weakness was Natalie's strength. She too loved children. She adored the boy. There wasn't money enough on earth to buy him.

By this time she was developing a downy black moustache, the shadow of a coming—and unbecoming—event. Nazlo knew that he could not stand her as a wife. She would ruin what he thought of as his "career" if he took her to live with him in New York. Yet he wanted the boy, and a compromise was arranged. He hired an apartment in Marseilles for the young woman, and engaged a trained English nurse to care for the child. Natalie was promised four thousand francs a month, to combine motherhood with silence and discretion. Once a year, on the excuse of a flutter at "Monte," Nazlo went for a month—slightly out of season—to the South of France.

Only twice had he failed to make this visit; during two years of the war when travelling had been difficult. During that period Eustace the second had grown to be a fine boy, but such fineness as the mother had possessed was blurred. She missed stage-life. Home existence bored her. She dared not take a lover, for she suspected that Nazlo was having her watched. Instead, she took to absinthe—the beautiful green, forbidden drink, which those who worshipped it, still know how to find.

When Nazlo saw Terry Desmond at the Blue Moon Inn he had been married for seven years, and had been in love at least seven times seven since then. In a way, his marriage protected him. He could always say, "My dear girl, I can't marry you, I'm married already"; though, except in such cases, he never spoke of his wife.

It was in his thought that, if a chance ever came to marry some princess of society, he might induce Natalie to change her mind and free him. He had ten times the money now that had been his when first he tried bribery.

As for Terry, Julia had been right when she warned Desmond that Nazlo would harm the girl if he found her. But his knowledge that the "kid" had disliked him enough to run away was more maddening than Natalie's classic holdup. When he motored back to the Blue Moon, empty of Terry, a sensation of sickness had him by the throat. He didn't hate the child. He was afraid that something might happen to her in New York, and that, if she returned, she would be worse than lost to him.

Deep under his anxiety was this dread of loss for *himself;* but he believed that his fear was for the girl. He wished with all his heart that he had kept more self-control, and had not frightened the "convent kid." If he had been more careful, she would now be safe.

"I never meant to hurt her," he repeated, though he knew in his heart that he would have hurt her, given the chance.

The morning after Terry's escape he telephoned for Desmond, asking if the girl had come back, and was told that she had not come. But he was far from satisfied with this news. Ill with a violent headache after a sleepless night, he went again to the Blue Moon and questioned Desmond, fortunately for Julia, some time before she arrived.

"This thing isn't my fault," he insisted, "but I feel responsible. We can't let matters drift. If you have no idea where your daughter is, I'll engage a private detective to find her, at my own expense."

Desmond took alarm at that. A smart detective would soon come upon Julia's trail. He saw that between two evils, he might avoid the greater by owning knowledge of Terry's whereabouts. He couldn't let Nazlo suppose her to be in New York, however, lest even that hint should lead to Julia. The unlucky resemblance was the danger!

"I've told you the truth, Mr. Nazlo," he said. "I'd had no word from my girl last night; but it came to me as I lay awake where she *might* have gone, and I telegraphed there, as it's in the country, and no 'phone. Well, these old friends of Teresa's don't approve of me or the Blue Moon, so the answer I got was neither 'Yes' nor 'No.' This is all it was: 'Have no anxiety for your daughter. She is safe.'"

"I should like to see the telegram," Nazlo suggested.

Desmond hadn't thought of that; but he did not hesitate long. "I tore it up," he answered. "I don't worry now, so there was no good keeping a bit of paper. Terry's all right. But I'm afraid, Mr. Nazlo, neither you nor me will get sight of her for some little time. When she comes back, if you want to explain things to her, I'll let you know she's here. But I expect you'll have clean forgotten a child like her before then."

Nazlo did not confirm nor dispute this opinion: nor did he ask Desmond if he were referring to the Long Island convent (where Terry was said to have been educated) when he spoke of the "country," "no 'phone" and "old friends." It wasn't worth while to betray himself. Either Desmond did refer to the convent, or wished to convey that impression. In either case it was useless to catechise the man.

Nazlo returned to New York, having dropped the subject of detectives; but from his apartment he called

up an agency. It wasn't difficult to discover that no telegram such as Desmond described had been delivered; in fact, he had received none at all on the morning in question. The next step was not so easy; and more than a week passed before the detective engaged to run the girl to earth could learn from an old gardener at the convent that Teresa Desmond had not returned to the fold.

Desmond had lied. Nazlo wondered why. The girl's father had trusted her to him in the first place, knowing that he had not the reputation of a saint. The proprietor of the Blue Moon wouldn't be shocked at what had happened in New York, even if he'd heard an exaggerated story. There was a different reason for his evasions. Nazlo racked his brains for it; and news of Natalie's illness in Marseilles found no room in his thoughts. She'd been ill before, and the nurse was on hand to look after Eustace junior.

It occurred to Nazlo that Desmond wished to turn his attention from New York, therefore he deduced that Terry was there. But New York was a big haystack in which to find one small needle!

Because the task looked hopeless, Nazlo never ceased thinking of it, and of the girl. Mentally he lived through every moment of their evening together, hoping to stumble upon some clue. Then, at last, he recalled her interest in Riverside Drive; how she'd wished to pass along slowly and look at the houses.

Now, he asked himself: among the thousands of dwellers on Riverside Drive was there one likely to be a friend of little Teresa Desmond's? He reviewed names, and finally that of Juliet Divine sprang into his head. God! *That likeness!* What a tenth-rate

fool he'd been not to put two and two together before this!

He jumped to the conclusion that Juliet Divine, the Million Dollar Doll, and Teresa Desmond of the Blue Moon Inn were closely related, probably sisters, and that the father wished to conceal the fact, either because he was ashamed of Juliet, or because she was ashamed of him.

The detective was consulted, and sent out on the trail once more. It sounded like a soft job, if the two were living in Juliet's apartment, but it proved baffling. If the younger girl was there, she was being hidden. The one servant in Miss Divine's employ was not to be "drawn"; and before anything definite had been learned, a cablegram from Marseilles had to be answered by Nazlo in person. Natalie had had a third apoplectic fit, the English nurse wired, and had passed away without regaining consciousness. Nazlo was free, without scandal! He had never dared hope for such luck. It had seemed to happen only in books.

He left at once for the South of France to settle affairs and to take charge of the child, whom he determined to educate in America. The boy was not well, however, and what had seemed a feverish cold developed into scarlatina. Waiting at Marseilles bored Nazlo; and as none knew that he ought to be a mourning widower, there was no harm in killing time at Monte Carlo.

Natalie Corézo had been dead a fortnight when he met Miles Sheridan and Terry on the Casino Terrace: and only the day before he had received a telegram from his employé in New York: "J. D. supposed married to Spaniard. Certainly has left home. Rumour younger

girl with her. Apartment let strangers. Will send further news promptly."

If Juliet were married, she would not *quite* so soon be at Monte Carlo with Miles Sheridan! Besides, *she* would not have started at sight of a face from New York. Where she went, she flaunted herself. No. The girl with Sheridan was Terry Desmond.

As Nazlo accepted this supposition, a real sadness was in his heart. The thought that she had been taken from him by another man—a man above his social "climb"—made him sure that he had really loved the child. He could not remember caring as much for any girl, as he cared for her. She was different from the rest. Though he had resolved to marry a "swell" if he could get one, he felt that if Terry had been kind, he might have been tempted to offer her Natalie's place. She was so beautiful, so attractive, that with his money she might make a brilliant success. Now, it was too late—because of Miles Sheridan. As things were, Nazlo would not want Terry for his wife; yet he could not bear to give her up, having found her. Something that he thought was his heart ached with a grinding ache.

He determined to learn what he could about Sheridan and the girl, without approaching them again, until he should learn his own mind. Throughout the morning he heard nothing. Every one he knew, who knew Sheridan, seemed surprised at the arrival of the pair. In the afternoon, in the bar of the Sporting Club however, he came across an acquaintance who spoke of Sheridan—had been at Harvard with him. This man was able to tell that Sheridan had brought his yacht, "Silverwood," into Monaco harbour early that day.

Nazlo had seen Miles and the girl playing roulette

in the Club, though he had kept in the background, out of eyeshot. They looked absorbed, and he counted that the "tables" would hold them for some time to come. He was stopping at the Hôtel de Paris, and a car he had hired was in a garage close by. Five minutes after he had hurried out of the Club, he was in the car, spinning down to the port.

He had no intention of going on board the yacht. There would be nothing to gain by trying that game. But there was a detective strain in the Greek Shoe King, and an instinct that told him he might "pick up something" down at the harbour.

Having arrived, he got out of the car and walked about, pretending to interest himself in the small, brightly painted boats lying ready for hire. He had eyes to spare, however, for other things; and he blinked in the sunshine as he stared at "Silverwood," white as a great swan in the green water.

As he gazed, a woman's figure slowly descended the gangway, and seated itself solidly in a waiting boat; the figure of an elderly woman, he thought. Two smart sailors began to row her swiftly towards shore, and they had not taken many strokes before Nazlo was inspired. A taxi was standing near his car. He went to it, and offered a hundred francs to the chauffeur. "Go up to the Hotel du Louvre and ask if Mr. Eustace Nazlo is staying there," he ordered. "If not, you needn't come back to tell me. I shall expect you only if the answer is, 'Yes.'"

The man drove off grinning, though he had been engaged to take a woman to Mentone. He would not have received more than forty francs for that service, counting return fare.

Nazlo was sure that the taxi would not come back.

XXVIII

WHEN Mrs. Harkness landed she looked about for the taxi which, she understood, had been ordered for her. Only an important car stood in the place where the taxi ought to have been, and "Harky" hesitated. "I suppose you're not a taxi, are you?" she enquired of the chauffeur.

He, not understanding English, shrugged, and answered volubly in French. It was then that Nazlo turned from his inspection of boats and hurried to the rescue. He took off his hat to the old servant as politely as if she had been a duchess.

"I saw you trying to ask the chauffeur some question, Madam," he said. "But he doesn't know any language except his own, so I came to see if I could help you."

Mrs. Harkness was impressed. She considered the gentleman most distinguished.

"Thank you very much, sir," she replied, with her Ulster brogue. "I thought the car *couldn't* be a taxi! But never mind! I'm not too old to walk up the hill and get a taxi there."

"Please don't do that," Nazlo urged. "I shall be glad to take you up. I'm just ready to start. And we may be going the same way, further on. If so—"

"Ye're more than kind, I'm sure, sir!" she thanked him. "But I'm for Mentone, and that's not likely to be your way—"

"As it happens, it *is* my way!" Nazlo answered. "Delighted to be of service."

"Well, sir, if that's so, I won't refuse," said Harky. "If ye'll let me ride with the chauffeur—"

"Certainly not. You'll ride with me," insisted Nazlo.

"But I must tell you, I'm a servant, sir," explained the old woman.

"I'm sure you're a faithful one," Nazlo complimented her.

Being sixty, and looking every day of her age, Mrs. Harkness had no fear of a "kidnapping" plot. She accepted the pressing invitation, and was not astonished to hear, after the start, that Mr. Cozzens (so he introduced himself) was slightly acquainted with the owner of "Silverwood."

"I was surprised to see Mr. Sheridan on the terrace this morning," he went on. "I suppose the young lady with him (whom I know by sight also) isn't a guest on his yacht?"

Mrs. Harkness was ordinarily a dour woman to "pump" with questions about her master's affairs, or her own. The kindness of Mr. Cozzens, however, and the pleading tone which seemed to say, "I *hope* you can disabuse my mind of a painful impression!" tempted her to speak.

"The young lady is a guest, sir," she admitted. "No doubt you've heard that, and ye'll hear more. What Miss Divine may be at home, I don't know. It's not my business! But it is my business on Mr. Sheridan's yacht, where I look after her like her own mother would. Not that I have to protect her from anything or *anybody,* sir! If she was one of them Russian princesses bein' saved from the Bolshies, no greater respect could be shown her on board, beginnin' with my master, down to the sailors. And a nicer behaved young lady I never

met with. She keeps herself *to* herself, but she's sweet and considerate. And I shouldn't like to hear a word spoken against her!"

"You won't hear one from me!" Nazlo said cordially. Safe under the name of Cozzens (there was a Cozzens at Monte Carlo who had laughed with him over the "Divine Comedy," in the Sporting Club bar), the Shoe King contrived to coax a little more information from Mrs. Harkness. He did this so gently that the old woman hardly knew what she let drop. If he had not feared an encounter with Sheridan, who might have tired of gambling by this time, he would have offered hospitality for the run home; but he dared not do that, and the two parted at the gate of Miss Caroline Sheridan's villa in Mentone.

Nazlo felt rejuvenated as the car spun him back to Monte Carlo, for not even the most confirmed cynic could doubt the word of a Mrs. Harkness. Little details of the voyage gleaned from her were like bits of a jig-saw puzzle making up a surprising picture. He pieced together morsels of gossip he'd heard about Miles and Betty Sheridan, with other morsels concerning Betty and Paul di Salvano. Then he added to these the news from his detective in New York, that Juliet Divine was said to have married a Spaniard. Next to this went the facts about Terry which were in his own possession: her likeness to Juliet; her start at sight of him on the terrace; and, with a few more items that fitted in, Nazlo had before his mind's eye a picture sketched on the lines of reality.

He had enough imagination to see that a man of Sheridan's type might throw away his reputation to save that of his wife, without any wish to profit by the situation. By the time that Nazlo stepped out of

his car before the Hôtel de Paris, he had deduced the truth as it stood between Miles Sheridan and Terry Desmond, with the exception of two important details. It did not occur to him that Sheridan might be ignorant of the girl's identity; and he could not comprehend how Teresa Desmond had come to play "stool pigeon" in the place of that notorious young woman, the Million Dollar Doll.

His curiosity as to this was almost unbearable, but he resolved that sooner or later he would get to the bottom of the mystery. Meanwhile he rejoiced like a boy in the conviction that the convent child was still the convent child; and the idea that Sheridan might mean to marry her when the divorce was got, crystallised his own wish to have the girl at almost any price, into a firm intention.

That night he saw again the two from the yacht, dining at the Hôtel de Paris, the supposed Juliet Divine very beautiful, very young, very much stared at. Nazlo began to want Terry more than he had known he could want anything, and he wondered if he could further his own interests by appealing to the police. If he could swear that, to his own knowledge, the girl on board "Silverwood" was not Juliet Divine and that she was under age, he might somehow tear her from Sheridan. But he could not prove his statements without a long delay, and even if he could, this wasn't America: the police might laugh at him for his pains. At last the only thing he could think of which might help was to write Mrs. Miles Sheridan a very carefully thought out letter.

Nazlo had met Betty once, just after the end of the war, before the return of her husband from France. It was in California, where he had gone on business.

She had run out to Los Angeles with a woman friend, older than herself, to rest from Red Cross work and to "see what the movie people were like."

He remembered hearing it said that Mrs. Sheridan had really come because Prince di Salvano was at Hollywood acting in a special film for which, though his was a small part, a special price had been offered him. Betty and the Shoe King had been introduced to each other at the home of a rich, rather fast man, half Greek, who had built a marvellous house outside Los Angeles. Nazlo had sat next her at table, but Salvano had taken her in to dinner, and she—absorbed in the Italian—had thrown her other neighbour only a few words. Probably she had forgotten him, but she must know the name of Eustace Nazlo, the Shoe King. He could remind her of the dinner party at Los Angeles.

Late that night he wrote the letter, after tearing up several sheets, and went out with it himself to the post-office, so that it could not fail to go by the first train to Paris.

After that there was a slump in excitement, for he was compelled to "wait and see." All he could do was to watch from a distance: to transfer himself from the Hôtel de Paris, Monte Carlo, to the Hôtel Royal, Nice, when "Silverwood" weighed anchor in Monaco Harbour, and dropped anchor at the port of Nice.

The yacht had spent five days at Monaco. She gave the same length of time to Nice, and one day less to Cannes, where Nazlo followed also, without getting within speaking distance of Terry. He might have forced an interview, but he knew that he would lose, not gain, by active interference and he felt that, in one way or other, his moment would come.

After a fortnight of dawdling along the Azore Coast,

Sheridan thought that he had given the French Riviera enough free food for gossip. "Silverwood" steamed for the Italian Riviera, and Miss Juliet Divine was displayed (as if she had been a "show girl" again) at San Remo, at Genoa, and Santa Margherita. The next stage was Naples, and there in the bay the yacht lay for a week.

Sheridan had planned, in New York, to visit only places in which friends from home and abroad were likely to be sunning themselves, for no others were worth his while. But things had changed since then. He wanted to take his companion to Pompeii, Amalfi, and Ravello, because he felt that she would thrill to their beauty and history. He wished her to see them with him. And Terry forgot all that she had suffered of shame and humiliation when, with few staring eyes to watch, she went with her "Prince" into this Wonderland beyond her dreams.

The two were on happier terms by this time. Though they never said anything personal or intimate, Sheridan treated the girl as a Prince should treat a Cinderella during the early stages of acquaintance; perhaps about the middle of the third dance at the ball! In other words, there was an informal, temporary pact of good comradeship between them, and Terry was often radiantly joyous for a few moments—when she could push all thought of the future from her mind.

It was a month after the day "Silverwood" left Monte Carlo, and nearly two months after she steamed away from Brooklyn, that the yacht slipped into harbour at Algiers: and Terry was looking forward to Algiers. There would be more people there (people who interested themselves in her, in that dreadful,

nerve-tearing way people had) than there had been at Naples; but Sheridan had told her stories of Algeria and its chief city, the ancient haunt of pirates: its secretive Kasbah, with the blank-faced, whitewashed houses, and streets so narrow that the sunshine trickled through shadow like a thread of gold laid on black velvet; the veiled women with eyes like stars; the oriental shops and bazaars, and the marvellous Arab villas whose gardens were like an Omar Khayyám paradise.

As they came into harbour at sunrise the distant buildings of the town, dazzling white, were pearls scattered on a high green cushion. The yells of the Arab boatmen, and their costumes, astonished Terry. She was afraid of boring Sheridan, or she would have cried out again and again in her excitement.

He had described the Hotel St. George, with its beautiful terrace, and proposed taking her there for a ten o'clock breakfast. They drove through the town in a taxi, up to Mustapha Superieure, and, arrived at the hotel, Sheridan was almost gay. "We'll have our coffee and rolls and honey on the terrace," he said. To his own surprise, he felt happy and carefree. But he did not stop to analyse his sensations.

"Oh, isn't it all wonderful?" the girl murmured, as they stood together on the terrace, looking over the blue bay of Mustapha. Marble pillars twined with flowers gleamed against the sky. Oranges glowed like lighted lamps, and roses hung in festoons.

Miles did not answer. His wandering eyes had reached a group of three persons seated at a small, round table.

Sheridan recognised only one, but that one would make the town of Algiers intolerable: Prince Paul di Salvano!

XXIX

THE group consisted of a grizzled, square-chinned, elderly man, who would have looked American at the North Pole; a plumply pretty girl with a peach-like skin, immense violet eyes and bobbed brown hair; while the third member of the trio was a young man, very dark, very handsome, very slim and very smart: the perfect type of what New York has named "lounge lizard."

This was Paul di Salvano, whom Miles had supposed to be on the other side of the world, waiting for Betty to begin divorce proceedings.

Miles hated Salvano. The Italian had not broken the heart of Betty Sheridan's husband, because his heart was not in Betty's keeping. But the man had broken Miles Sheridan's life, and such vanishing ideals of respect and affection as Betty had left him after seven years of marriage.

When Miles had come upon the pair together there had been a moment when he saw red, and would have killed Salvano, or fought to kill. But it had seemed to him as if the figure of Mrs. Parmalee rose between them, and her voice said, "Remember your promise!"

He could not touch Salvano then. To kill him would mean a scandal which couldn't be hushed up. He, Miles, would not be convicted of murder. He would be acquitted by the unwritten law. But Betty would be ruined, and her ruin would be the breaking of his promise.

He had taken the way which seemed best to save her, and give her what she wanted. Just lately the sea winds had cooled the fever of his blood, and for weeks he had seldom had more than a passing thought of Paul di Salvano; "Paolo," as he had heard Betty call her lover. But now, in an instant, all the hatred poured back in a flood, as if a sluice had opened.

"Damn the hound!" he said to himself. "Betty must have sent him to spy on me."

His impulse was to turn and walk off the terrace with Juliet Divine; but quickly he changed his mind. He wouldn't be driven away by that cur!

Choosing a table, he made Terry sit facing the bay of Mustapha, and he took a chair opposite. This gave their profiles to the group of three, distant from them one-third the length of the terrace. They need not look towards the party, yet would not seem to avoid it by deliberately turning their backs.

"I've been thinking," Miles began, when coffee had arrived, "if you wouldn't mind a change of plan, I'd like to take you for a short desert trip before we do much sight-seeing in Algiers; just a short spin; only a night or two away—or more if we like; then back. There's a beautiful little oasis called Bousaada, only seven or eight hours from Algiers with a decent motor, but wilder and far less spoiled by tourists than Biskra. Lots of people don't know that it exists. But I've been there with—I've been there to see the dancing of the Ouled Naïls. You've heard of them, of course—you who dance so charmingly on the stage."

Terry shook her head. "No, I never heard of the Ouled Naïls," she replied.

Sheridan had ceased discrediting every statement of hers, which fact struck him as strange. He even be-

lieved most things she said, without remembering to laugh at his own credulity.

"Well, Bousaada is the original home of the Ouled Naïl tribe that brings up its girls to be dancers," he explained. "They're interesting, and often they're beautiful. More than half the journey to Bousaada by car is rather splendid. There's no railway, as there is to Biskra. Would you like to go? Or would it vex you to leave your sight-seeing and shopping in Algiers till later?"

"I've no shopping," the girl answered. (Again Miles remembered Harky's words: "I don't believe she's got a cent!") "I shall like the sight-seeing here, just as well after Bousaada. And I *love* to go away to peaceful places where—where—" She bit her lip.

"Where—what?" he insisted.

"Oh, nothing much. It's silly, I suppose. But I get nervous having so many grand sort of people who know you stare at me. That's all."

"*You* know as many 'grand sort' of people as I do." Sheridan smiled, almost apologetically. He might have substituted "men" for "people." Many women stared at Juliet Divine, but only men bowed.

Terry didn't dispute his amendment. "I should like to go to Bousaada," she said.

In the African sunshine (faintly hazed to-day, as if the light shone through a pale sapphire) the girl looked, Sheridan thought, young as the morning and sweeter than he had seen her yet. A sense of his own selfishness towards her oppressed him. Each day he exploited her, giving her little or no return, since—thus far—she had refused to take the pay agreed upon. The girl's "blood was on her own head" of course, but there was one small thing he might do—an experiment he might try, to

gauge her feelings. As the thought came into his head he spoke.

"You don't dislike Mrs. Harkness, do you?"

"No, indeed!" Terry answered. "I've grown fond of her I was afraid of her at first—but not now. And I think she—almost—likes me, too."

"She sings your praises whenever she gets the chance," said Miles. "She's—er—a sort of unofficial chaperon for you on board 'Silverwood'; and if you happen to remember, you've never been away from the yacht with me alone, except for a day's excursion. I've always brought you back to Harky every night."

"I do remember very well," Terry said, wondering what was to come.

Sheridan threw her a keen look. "Of course you're too much a Bohemian to—er—worry about chaperons," he went on. "They're as old fashioned as dragons, and even if they weren't, it wouldn't have suited my book on this trip, you know, to have your every step dogged by a duenna. On the contrary! But you and I won't be acting for the gallery at Bousaada. The chances are we won't meet a European there, except a few French officers, *en garrison.* Would you like to take old Harky along? She'd nearly fall over herself with joy to go."

"Oh, I'd *love* to have her!" cried Terry, clapping her hands.

It occurred to Miles that Salvano and his friends were probably staring; but suddenly he didn't care. He cared for nothing except the girl. She looked a darling child. She *should* be a child for a few days, and he would be a boy. Old Harky should play nurse to them both. Away off in the desert he and Juliet Divine would

forget everything except the sunshine, the golden sands, and the burning violet of the African sky.

"Good!" he said in a care-free voice. "We'll start soon. It's too late to-day, because I must hire a car, and there'll be some packing. The journey's seven hours at least, and we ought to arrive before dark. But I'll take you to a Mosque or two this afternoon" (he was pretty sure that Salvano would do no sight-seeing on these lines), "and we can get off about ten to-morrow morning."

When they rose from their table a quick glance showed Sheridan that the Italian and his friends were gone. He took Terry to the Museum at Mustapha Superieure, where only those interested in history and archæology were likely to come, and there he left her while he hurried off to hire an automobile. There were several garages, and as the season had just begun he found a good car and a chauffeur at the second place he visited. Satisfied that all was arranged, he returned for Terry, showed her El Biar, and the Jardin d' Essai with its wonderful trees; the Kasbah; the Mosques; and the Rue Bab Azoun. Everything else for which people visit Algiers, Miles left till their return, because —he imagined—Salvano wasn't a man to stop long in one place which lacked the kind of amusement he cared for. Now that the "spy act" was accomplished, a wire would probably flash the news to Betty. Salvano would then travel to Biskra, and await the next chance to do a little spying. Every one does go to Biskra, and Miles had intended to go. But Salvano's movements in Algiers would decide his. It was bad enough to keep running against Nazlo, but Nazlo was a welcome sight compared with the Italian. Nazlo appeared only in the distance and had as much right as Miles Sheridan to

wander along the shores of the Mediterranean. But Miles drew the line at Paul di Salvano.

He and Terry dined on board "Silverwood" that night in the harbour of Algiers, and Miles was more friendly than usual in his manner, with the dim wish to "make up" for keeping the girl on the yacht. She had never enjoyed an evening so much.

Next morning early Sheridan, Terry, and Mrs. Harkness set off in a high-powered touring car for the desert oasis of Bousaada.

Terry had read "The Garden of Allah," on board the yacht, and last night at dinner she and Sheridan had talked of the desert. The girl was disappointed not to see a waste of golden sand, when Algiers and its suburbs were left behind. But the Moorish irrigation and fields of wheat, green in the midst of desolate tracts, were like the preface to an exciting book. Then, at last, there was yellow sand whose hillocks were sparsely sprinkled with grass. It was as if the waves of a stormy sea had been sown with seeds which had sprouted, and covered the tops of the billows with green. The car rocked among these billows like a boat; but presently the waves subsided into a plain, and there was a glimpse of real desert. Away in the distance the sand was piled in fantastic shapes, like a troup of lions that grouped and crouched, tawny in the sunshine, to drink from lakes of purple shadow.

Beyond the horizon seemed to lie the sea, deep violet, and still asleep. Terry could hardly believe that it was not the sea; and always just ahead, as the car plunged on, lay masses of colour—gold, rose and amethyst—which were like beds of flowers till they turned with nearness into bunches of desert crystal, and red or purple rock.

In the midst of brown and arid wastes were emerald patches, bright as a serpent's eyes. By and by, low mountains like a belt of uncut sapphires, enclosed the travellers in a secret world. Terry saw her first camels, passing in a string, and gazing at the car with supercilious disdain. Here and there a miniature oasis lay spread over the sand like a dark prayer rug on the tarnished gold floor of an ancient mosque.

"When shall we see Bousaada?" Terry wondered. But the mountains, of unbelievable shapes—castles and towers, sphinxes and giant tables—seemed to have banded themselves together for the keeping of secrets. The road improved, and had been carefully made; yet apparently it led nowhere.

As the afternoon waned the car forged on through an ocean of changing colours. The blue mountains turned crimson and mauve, and the sand glittered in the sunshine like a powder of rubies. Terry had not spoken for a long time; but when the gateway of the mountains opened to show a forest of dark green palms, ringed with gold, and the diamond sparkle of water, involuntarily she touched Sheridan's hand.

His closed upon it.

The girl's heart stopped, then beat again with a new rush of blood.

She looked up at him, and their eyes met. She did not know how to read his look, but it made her happier than she had ever been.

Miles knew what he might have known days ago. Such as this Juliet Divine was, he loved her!

XXX

IT seemed to Terry that something very great and wonderful had happened.

If she could have put it into words it would have sounded like nothing at all. But the thing itself—the reality which she felt—was as much greater than words as the perfume of the rose is greater than the rose.

Neither spoke. They sat in silence, close together in the car, which now and then flung the girl against the man's shoulder, with some sudden jolt; and Sheridan was making up his mind to an act which, only a few days ago, would have been impossible. Now, nothing was impossible where Juliet Divine was concerned, except to let her go from him forever.

Mrs. Harkness was chatting on the front seat with the French-Algerian chauffeur who had a little English, and knew all about Bousaada: but the two behind did not even hear the voices.

Terry, who could not tell what was in Sheridan's heart, feared that he might hear hers beating, it was so loud in her own ears.

Even if he did not care in the wonderful way she cared, at least he must be trying to show that he no longer despised her, and that, after this day, they were to be true friends. Of course, she reminded herself, he was married, and she—if he knew her real age —would seem to him a child. Still, whatever she was, and whatever he believed her to be, from this moment an exquisite change had come over their relations to one another. Terry realised that never until now had

she known the full meaning of ecstasy. The hand of the man she adored, clasping hers, had taught her what joy could be on earth, and her whole life had led up to this moment. If she had to die now, within an hour, she would have had something to make her years worth while.

As in a vision she saw the rose of early sunset fade from the billowing sand, to leave it a pale, luminous gold, strewn with heart-shaped, violet hollows that were tracks of camels' feet. She saw low tents of nomads, black striped with red, or orange striped with black, spread over the desert near the river and palms of Bousaada; and the thought flitted across the surface of her mind that they were like huge, resting butterflies. But all thoughts, except thoughts of Miles Sheridan, were on the surface. The depths of her were for him.

The chauffeur, who had been often to Bousaada, drove past the tall palms that spouted, above the river-bed, like fountains of dark water against the crimson sky; wove through the small white town, and stopped before a low-built hotel. Sheridan had wired for rooms (the telegraph poles stride far and far, along the Algerian desert) and the landlord came to greet his guests. A smiling dark maid showed "Mademoiselle et Madame" upstairs to their quarters; and a few minutes later Terry stepped from the long French window of her room onto a wide, covered balcony. Two other rooms opened also upon this balcony, and Terry had not stood by the rail looking down for more than a moment when Sheridan joined her.

He did not speak, but took his place beside the girl, and together they gazed at the river, the palm grove, and the distant hills. There was little water in the *oued,* but what there was sparkled like shattered glass,

and the wet stones between the pools were red as huge garnets, or purple as lumps of amethyst. All the hills, near and far, blazed with the last fires of sunset and poured flames high into a sky that was azure at the zenith.

"Do you like it?" Sheridan asked at last.

"I didn't know there could be anything so beautiful in the world," Terry answered: and her voice shook a little, because these were the first words they had exchanged since he had held her hand.

"It is beautiful," Miles granted. "But you'd soon tire of it!"

"No, I should never tire of it—I couldn't," the girl assured him. "I shall hate to go away when the time comes."

He laughed. "I wonder? That would depend upon how long you had to stop. You wouldn't—exchange New York for Bousaada!"

"I would," Terry persisted. "I couldn't bear to *live* in New York. It's splendid there—but just to *go,* now and then, from the country. Not to live. I think to *live,* people need sky, and great wide spaces."

"You seem to be a very different sort of girl at heart from what one would judge you, if you know yourself and speak out your real thoughts, not just some sudden impulse that can't last," Sheridan said. "Can you imagine yourself a desert dweller?"

"It would be glorious!" Terry cried. "That is, if—" She stopped.

"Go on. 'If'—what?"

"Oh—only that I wouldn't like to be quite, quite alone. It is so beautiful in the desert—a desert like this—that it would be sad to be all alone, sadder than in a place not so beautiful. Because I should want

some one to—to talk with about the beauty—some one who'd understand."

"Some one, you mean, whom you loved?"

"I—suppose so."

"*Can* you love?"

The words were spoken, not sharply or harshly, but with a certain hoarseness, as if they came with an effort.

Terry drew in her breath with a little gasp. "I—think so," she answered almost in a whisper. Her hands were on the rail, grasping it tightly. Sheridan laid his hand over the one nearest him, and pressed it.

"Girl!" he said, "I don't know what you've done to me. But it's something very big. It's limitless. I'm not sure it doesn't feel like the best thing that ever came into my life. Is it possible that *I've* done anything of that sort to you?"

She knew that he was looking at her, but she could not lift her head. "Yes. Yes, you have," she murmured.

He turned abruptly, took her by the shoulders, and made her face him. "Do you mean—you *love me?*" he said.

"Very, very much."

He could scarcely hear the words; but he felt that he could have read them if he had been deaf. The girl's slim shoulders pulsed and throbbed in his throbbing grasp; and it seemed as if the desert spirits had wrapped them together in a blue, star-embroidered veil, scented with wild thyme. The sun had gone. Night had come; and it was theirs.

"My darling, darling girl," Sheridan whispered, close to the bent head. "I didn't know there was such a force as this love of mine for you. It's immense—

above everything, greater than anything. You've *got* to belong to me. Oh—don't misunderstand, for God's sake! When I'm free—when my wife has divorced me—I'm going to marry you—if you love me enough for that. Then you and I can live in the desert if we like. All the world can be ours, except the silly world of society and cities, where people gossip and backbite. *Do* you love me enough for that?"

"I love you enough for anything!" Terry answered, in a soft, clear voice. "Anything—if it wouldn't hurt *you*. But I love you too much to hurt you. Tell me—" she pushed him off with both hands on his breast, when he would have held her close, "tell me, is there something about—about the special kind of girl you think I am, that would hurt you if—we—if I were with you always?"

The question was the last that Miles would have expected from Juliet Divine. He was taken aback by it for an instant, but only for an instant.

"Things like—what you mean, don't hurt a man in any way that matters to him, if he loves a woman as I love you," he said. "You'd be making as much of a sacrifice as I would, if we married, because—for our happiness and peace of mind—we'd have to live out of the whirl that's been your life up to now. But if you can forget the past and not regret it, I swear to you that it shall be blotted out for me. The present will be ours, and the future. The one question is: Are you sure of yourself?"

"Oh, a thousand times, about loving you!" the girl said. "But—but there are things about myself I'd have to tell you, if—if—you really wanted to marry me, some day. I'd give anything to tell them now, but I'm afraid it would be wrong and disloyal to some one

else. I *wish* I could tell! It seems as if I must! I—"

"Don't!" Sheridan cut her short. "Don't speak of it. I don't want to hear anything at all. I've known you for two months, Juliet—two months that seem now to have meant more to me than as many years. And I'm convinced—not by reason, but by what I *feel* about you—that your real self—your soul—whatever one chooses to call it—has triumphed over—everything. *I've* got the real you! And you've got all there is of me. That's enough. Nothing else is going to count. Will you forgive me for my brutishness on the yacht?"

"As if there was anything to forgive!" Terry cried. "But I *do* want to tell you. I'll write a letter, to find out if I can. It may be weeks before I get an answer, but—"

"Weeks are for nothing, except to be happy in, and blot out whatever mars our peace—this vast, beautiful peace of the desert," Miles said. "We shall be engaged people, Juliet, with Harky to chaperon us. God! I'd give my right hand now if I hadn't used you as—as a kind of decoy on this trip. I can't bear to think how your name will be dragged into print, and how—you'll be misjudged. But what's done is done. As things are, I don't see that there's anything I can do to dam the cataract. Besides, if I hadn't brought you on board for the one purpose, I should never have met you at all; Juliet, I shouldn't have *lived!*"

"I don't care *what* people say about me, if you don't care," Terry comforted him. "Even the nuns—you know, they believe it's horribly wrong for people to marry if they've been divorced. They think it's no marriage at all. Of course I know nothing about such

things. But I have thoughts. And my thoughts tell me that marriage can't be real marriage without love. If you didn't love Miss Sh—if you didn't love your wife, or she you, then that wasn't marriage, and—ours will be. I'd be sorry to have the dear nuns think me wicked; but still—they don't *matter,* no one matters, beside you."

Miles laughed. "I should hope not!" he said.

The blue veil that had wrapped them away from spying eyes was dark purple now. They were safe in it. "Safe" was a beautiful word! Sheridan crushed the girl in his arms, and kissed her lips for the first time, a long, long kiss, sweet as the honey of Hymettus, and pure as a boy's prayer.

. . . . . .

After a time there came the sound of a window being thrown open. Mrs. Harkness, having unpacked Miss Divine's luggage and her own, pushed back the green shutters of her French window at the other end of the balcony and bustled out for a draught of fresh air after her work.

"Harky, come here," Sheridan commanded, his hand on Terry's shoulder, their two figures dark as if clearly cut in black velvet against a sky sequined with stars.

Harky was not like an ordinary servant. Miles loved and valued her. He knew that she would cheerfully give her life for him.

"I want to tell you," he said, as with startled reluctance the old woman hesitated, "I want to tell you that here is my happiness. She's promised to help me 'knit up my ravelled skein' of life again, Harky. She's the only one who can do it. I've been finding that out day by day. When the time comes that we can, we'll begin a new existence together. Are you glad, Harky?"

"Oh, Mr. Miles!" stammered his old nurse. "If it makes you happy, I'm happy too, that's all I can say, taken so sudden-like. There's nothing I want so much as your happiness, sir; and I do think that Miss Divine is a young lady with a good heart. You can rest on *that,* Mr. Miles!"

As Harky quavered on she spoke more and more warmly, though her face showed trouble. But Terry was not satisfied. She did want Mrs. Harkness to be glad, really glad, if only that were possible.

Late that night, when the girl had parted from Miles after a walk in moonlight bright as day, though twice as wonderful, the old woman was waiting up to help undress her.

"Have I made you sad—or disappointed, Mrs. Harkness?" Terry wistfully asked.

"No—no, Miss," Harky answered.

"Tell me," the girl went on; "do you think divorce is wicked?"

"Not I!" protested the old woman. "I'm North of Ireland. I'm no Catholic. Them *frivolous* divorces I do condemn: that kind where their tempers don't compat with each other, as they call it. But when a woman has deceived her husband that trusted, even if he couldn't love her—*especially* deceived him for an *Eytalian,* divorce is the only thing to part two persons who never could have been one, in God's holy ordinance. I'm sure my master has behaved like a *martyr*—if not a *saint*—and Mrs. Miles should be on her knees to him. If you can give him the happiness he's never truly had, Heaven forbid *I* should begrudge it—me who nursed him when he was a motherless little boy. But I could wish—ah, me, what's the good of wishing?—We must take things as they come and be thankful."

"What could you wish in particular? Is it something about me?" Terry insisted.

"God forgive me if I hurt yer feelin's, Miss, but ye know quite well what I'm meanin'. There, it's out now. And we'll bury it like it was a hatchet."

It seemed to Terry a very sharp hatchet, which cut at Julia as well as herself.

"Mrs. Harkness," she said, "I can't tell Mr. Sheridan this that I'm going to tell you, because he'd only ask me questions which I can't answer—yet. But *you* won't ask questions. It's only this. It may have been very bad of me to come on this trip, yet it was *meant* to be good. I can't help believing I'm not as bad as you think, in other ways. I'm not worthy of Mr. Sheridan, of course, except that I worship him, and I've worshipped him for years and years. But I've been thinking, trying to remember every single thing I ever did, and truly I *can't* remember one which makes me too bad to marry a man I love. I couldn't confess my sins at the convent because I wasn't a Catholic, but I used to tell the nuns, and ask their advice."

"And what did the nuns do?" the old woman asked.

"Oh, they only patted my hand and called me their dear child."

Mrs. Harkness shook her head. It seemed to her that the nuns had been very lenient, very lenient indeed! But then, *she* was lenient, too. She couldn't help being it. There was something about the girl, something that *took* you, made you feel tender over her, made you want her to have happiness at any price. The old woman felt guilty and glad at the same time.

Downstairs a telegram had just been given to Miles, greatly to his astonishment, for he thought that no one knew where he was, except the captain of "Silverwood."

But the telegram, when he opened it, purported to be from the captain of "Silverwood," and it was an amazing telegram. Miles could hardly believe that there was not a mistake, or that some one had not played him a hateful, practical joke.

His thoughts travelled fast, and stopped at Eustace Nazlo.

Nazlo had appeared twice since their first meeting at Monte Carlo: at Genoa and at Naples. His presence at these places might have been a coincidence of travel, but Sheridan had not taken it as such. He was sure that Nazlo was deliberately following the trail of "Silverwood," just keeping out of the way in order not to be called to account for impertinence. If he had come to Algiers, he could have learned without much difficulty that Sheridan had hired a car and gone with Miss Divine to Bousaada.

This telegram might not be from the captain, after all. It might be a trick to get him—Miles—out of the way, leaving the coast clear for Nazlo with Juliet, here in the desert.

Sheridan decided to wire Captain Yale at once for confirmation of the message, asking if he had sent it himself, and if the news it gave was true. He wrote out the telegram; but it was too late for it to go that night. Perhaps, if his question could have been on its way, he might have slept through some of the long hours. But the thought all those hours were being wasted ran like fire through his nerves. No sleep came to him, and he was out of bed at dawn.

XXXI

IF Betty Sheridan had been addicted to prayer (which she was not) she would have thanked Heaven the day that "Silverwood" steamed out to sea with Miles and Juliet Divine on board.

Instead of praying, she was in a mood to dance, for she had had worries and now she hoped that they might pass.

Paolo had been so hyper-chivalrous, so anxious to "put people off the track," that he had got himself talked about with a girl. Of course it was a flirtation—mere "camouflage"—but Betty hadn't liked hearing her friends (cats!) say it was a "case" with Salvano and Rose Callahan, and how wonderful it was for both of them: Rose to marry a Prince, Paolo to marry an heiress.

Rose was horribly rich—at least her father was, Sam Callahan of California, who had made millions in the war. Rose wasn't bad looking, though Betty thought her a *lump*. The two had come to New York, to wriggle into the right set on the strength of their money: staying at the Ritz and entertaining every one they could bribe with food and gifts. But now Miles had gone with Juliet Divine, and the news of his escapade would burst like a bomb on New York. Betty would "consult her lawyer," and the divorce, with alimony which would make her rich (though not as rich as Rose, even with her own small fortune left by Mrs. Parmalee) was practically in her pocket. Without that alimony Paolo couldn't marry her. He must have a rich wife.

Thank goodness the track was clear! Betty could go full speed ahead.

She telephoned to the furnished apartment where she had spent some happy hours with Paolo before he had begun to be—so prudent. Salvano's Chinese servant answered—an invaluable man for more reasons than one. His master was ill—suffering—and could not answer Madame. No, Madame, must not come. The Prince had grippe—not dangerous, but contagious. Madame must have patience for a few days. When the Prince was better he would call her up.

Betty rang off. She was disappointed, and—she wondered. *Was* it grippe or— Certain memories crept back. Sometimes Paolo took cocaine—oh, he wasn't a slave to it, but he knew the raptures it could give, and he had taught them to her in happier days. What an adventure it had been to learn with *him!*

She had sworn off now. People had told her she looked ill, and the thing she feared most was the loss of her beauty. To save that she'd slam the door of paradise. But Paolo?

She wrote a long letter, containing the news: Miles' going, and all it would mean for both. At the bottom of the last page were a dozen crosses.

Three days passed, and then came a written answer. Paolo's love and thanks, and congratulations. He was better, but the doctor had ordered him away at once. In fact, the doctor was going with him into the country. There was no chance of a meeting till he should return. He might be gone for ten days or two weeks. But later they would make up for lost time. He would telephone the moment he got back to New York.

Betty waited. Happiness died down, like a failing spring. She longed for a *piqure,* or a sniff of the

"snow." But she would not yield. She was looking so much better since she'd "reformed." And she *must* be beautiful, for Paolo.

The ten days, the two weeks, passed. There was no word from Paolo, no answer when she telephoned or wrote. A week's more grace she gave, and then, wearing a thick veil, she went in a taxi to the house where his apartment was. "When are you expecting the Prince?" she enquired of the hall porter.

"We are not expecting him, Madam," said the man. "The Prince has sublet the apartment."

"Since when?" Betty stammered.

"I couldn't tell you just when, Madam," was the answer, "for the new people are friends of the Prince's. But he's been gone three weeks, and Mr. and Mrs. Robert O'Riley moved in yesterday."

The Robert O'Rileys were "pals" of the Callahans, and had been staying at the Ritz. Hardly knowing what she meant to do, Betty taxied on to the hotel. There she asked for the Callahans. They had given up their suite. It was understood that they had gone abroad.

If only Betty had been going about, she would have heard the news sooner! But on Paolo's suggestion she had kept very quiet; the meek, deserted wife!

Now she was afraid to ask people who might know what had become of the Callahans, or to drop some hint which might bring up the name of Paul di Salvano. But she was sure to hear something soon, she told herself.

There seemed, however, to be a conspiracy of silence. Nobody spoke the two names which were of importance to her. At last she could bear the strain no longer and asked questions of Rose Callahan's friends. But Rose and her father had gone without a word. If they had

sailed for Europe, they had contrived to escape reporters. Yet the idea seemed to be that they *had* gone to Europe. Funny that Salvano had disappeared from New York at the same time! Oh, in the country, getting over grippe, was he? Well, dear Betty *ought* to know. She'd been one of his best friends and had stood up for him always.

Italy! What if the party of three had gone to Italy —to Rome, where Callahan could have a look at the Salvano family palazzo and see if it was worth the money. One or two people had heard—and passed on the gossip—that, although the old man had been keen on the Prince at first, he had heard stories and had not been so cordial towards the last. This ought to have been cheering. But Betty was past the stage of being cheered. She went home, her heart like lead, for it *knew* what her head tried not to believe: Salvano had ceased to care, if he had ever cared. He had gone after the heiress, a young girl, whom he could marry without displeasing his Catholic father, the Duke d'Almarra.

On the hall table in her own house, as she crept in like a shadow, she saw two letters with foreign stamps. Her pulses leaped, but neither envelope had Paolo's writing on it. One was addressed in a hand she didn't know. The other was adorned by the stiff Victorian penmanship of Miss Caroline Sheridan.

. . . . . .

Betty went draggingly to her boudoir. Since the letters were not from Paolo, they were worthless! She was tired. Nothing seemed of importance. Her heart had been rather "queer" now and then, since she had begun dosing herself with that acid stuff, for reducing fat. She flung herself on a sofa, and opened old Caroline's letter mechanically. It was dated from

Mentone. Perhaps Miles had arrived there, and met his maiden aunt!

As Betty's eyes travelled along the spidery lines, her lips curved in a sarcastic smile. "Juliet Divine *too* attractive in appearance," indeed!—"Modest manner!"—ha, ha!—"Miles treating her chivalrously!"—What a scream! These pious, interfering old maids, were *too* funny!

Betty had never seen Miss Sheridan, but Miles had described his aunt—kindly, if with a sense of humour. Now the reader of these closely written pages visualized the faded spinster who thought she had only to beckon, and the repentant wife would crawl half across the world to reclaim her husband. As for the suggestion that Miles, unless snatched from the burning, would marry a creature like Juliet Divine, it was absurd. In fact, each paragraph of old Carry's letter was more ridiculous than the last. But when she had read to the end, Betty was not amused.

The allusion to Juliet's youth was a slap. "This girl is much *younger* than you, my dear," emphasised Miss Sheridan, "as well as a rival in beauty to the *loveliest.* And you, who have been married for *years,* know even better than I do what men are."

"Old hag!" thought Betty. "She might have minded her own business instead of giving herself this trouble. What a cat to tell me that Juliet Divine is younger and prettier than I am! Old maid's spite. I've heard of the Million Dollar Doll for *years.* She must be every day of my age. She's stunning in the theatre, that's all. I remember her being pointed out to me when she was a show girl in some revue—so long ago I've forgotten what it was. I don't suppose she's any-

thing to look at these days without her war paint. But that old witch is such a *damn* fool!"

It was *nothing* to be twenty-eight. When Betty was feeling her best she looked a girl. Just now—and she jumped up to examine herself in a silver-framed "Psyche" mirror—she was not at her best, thanks to Paolo's cruelty. But Italian men were *like* that! *Cruel*—cruel as beautiful, satin-skinned panthers. This panther-cruelty was part of their attraction. They knew it. They did these things to hold you. They were spoiled, and temperamental. You could never count on what they might do next. But how they could make love—and make *you* love! After all, it wasn't certain that Paolo was with Rose. His mysterious absence might be part of a cautious plan. She might hear from him any day. There was no cause for despair.

Miss Sheridan's letter lay on the floor, where its reader had tossed it. Betty stooped to retrieve the two sheets of thin foreign paper, meaning to throw them on the fire of driftwood which burned in the grate. She wouldn't risk the stuff falling into a servant's hands! Beside the loose sheets and the torn envelope lay another envelope, unopened. Betty had forgotten it, but realised now that it had slid from her lap with Caroline's missive. The handwriting looked like that of a man; and the stamp bore the head of the Prince of Monaco.

"More news about Miles, from some other well-wisher!" she sneered, tearing the envelope.

The thick paper within had "Hôtel de Paris" engraved at the top of the first page. "Dear Mrs. Sheridan," Betty read; and still failed to recognise the writ-

ing. She had turned the letter over and had just found the signature when the telephone bell rang.

"Eustace Nazlo—Eustace Nazlo!" she repeated, as she reached out from the cushiony sofa to lift a full-skirted Louis Quinze doll off the receiver.

"Do I know Eustace Nazlo? Where did I meet him?" she wondered subconsciously as she called, "Hello?—Who is it?"

"Hello, old bean, it's Lil," answered the voice of Lilian Leslie, the pretty actress who was now Mrs. John Anderson, and loved by Betty because she had first introduced Paolo.

"Yes," Betty answered. "Just came in—rather a wreck. How are you?"

"In bed with a beast of a cold," replied the other. "If I could get out, I'd whiz round and see you. But I felt I *must* ring you up. Have you heard from our friend the Prince lately?"

"Not lately," Betty admitted, with a pang in heart and pride. "Why?"

"Kathleen O'Riley has just been in to sit with me," said Lilian. "You know she's a pal of Rose Callahan. My dear, she and Bob are in Paolo's apartment. The Callahans have sailed for Algiers, on one of those big ships that make Mediterranean tours, and Paolo's following a quicker way. Cherbourg, Marseilles and so on. I *hate* to tell you this, darling, but you ought to know at once. Kathleen thinks Rose was secretly *married* to Paolo—as legally as you can be married to a foreigner in New York! before they sailed. If not, she's anyhow determined to have him. Pop was rather off the Prince at last accounts, partly because of his flirtations with a *certain* little married lady. But Kath says Rose is bound to win out in the end."

"I can't believe Paolo would marry Rose Callahan," Betty choked. "She's so common. She—"

"Precious, it's sickening, but he *was* out for big boodle. I'm *sure* he liked you lots better than Rose; you're so much smarter and prettier—though, of course, she's a *girl,* which is an attraction to some men. And Rose will be so *disgustingly* rich, how could he resist?"

Betty could not answer. She felt as if she were dying. Hastily she hung up the receiver, knowing that Lil would understand, and cast herself face down on the sofa.

There was no hope, then. It was all true! She had lost Paolo! Her Italian boy was a traitor. She didn't know how to bear it.

Every one would laugh at her, as she had laughed at others, and when the scandal about Miles and Juliet Divine came out—a useless scandal now!—people would say that she couldn't even keep a husband!

It was too horrible! She was a deserted, discarded woman—she, Betty Sheen, Betty Sheridan, who had always been such a success. She wished that she had kept a bold front before Miles, and faced things out, denying that Salvano was her lover. In that case, she would still have a husband. Her position before the world would have been as good as ever; whereas now—She writhed as she thought of the future, and shuddering away from the picture, she remembered the letter from that man Eustace Nazlo.

XXXII

BETTY sought for the letter. There might be something in it about Paolo, or the Callahans! At first she could not find it but at last retrieved the crumpled sheet from under sofa cushions.

As she read again the beginning, she recalled in a flash the night in California when the Greek Shoe King had sat next her at dinner. Paolo di Salvano had taken her in, but she had turned now and then to throw a stray word to Nazlo. His heavy, yet clever face came back to her.

"Dear Mrs. Sheridan:

"You will be surprised to hear from me," Nazlo wrote. "I don't suppose you have thought of me since we met, but I have seen you since, here and there, at a distance. The memory of you has always been pleasant; a pretty, light-hearted lady with everything in the world she wanted.

"I shouldn't venture to write, if I didn't fear that your happiness is threatened. As a respectful friend, I can't let you be threatened with the danger of undeserved scandal, without warning you of peril. When you know, you can act or not, as you choose.

"I happened to meet Mr. Sheridan to-day on the Casino terrace, at Monte Carlo, where I'm staying. He had a companion, and at first I took her to be a young woman whose name you may know; Juliet Divine. She is somewhat notorious, and her nickname is 'the Million Dollar Doll.'

"In a moment, however, I saw I'd been mistaken. The lady was *not* Miss Divine, though the resemblance was extraordinary. She was much younger than Juliet Divine, and though physically like (except for the softness of early youth) mentally, and spiritually different.

"I happen to know a young girl very like Miss Divine, and—though I'm not sure—I believe the two are sisters. Surprised that this child should be with Mr. Sheridan, I learned that she was actually accompanying him on his yacht, posing as Juliet Divine.

"Had the girl really been Miss Divine, it would not have been my affair, and I shouldn't trouble you with this letter. You would hear sooner or later, and if you wished to divorce your husband you'd have the right to do so. But as it is, in the blinding light that beats upon the divorce court, the truth about this child's identity will surely come out. She is only seventeen, and was until a few months ago at school in a Long Island convent. She knows nothing of the world, and was innocent as a baby until some strange fate threw her into your husband's hands. What has happened since then I don't know. But the world will want to know that and a great deal more, if the case is taken up by the sensational newspapers.

"There must have been a plot, on the part of Juliet Divine herself, or that of the father, if the two are sisters. Mr. Sheridan may have been imposed upon (though that looks improbable), but he will certainly be made to appear a kidnapper. My personal opinion (if you'll forgive me) is that your husband must have met and become infatuated with the child: that he sought a way of freeing himself, and hit upon this one, taking it for granted that you would divorce him. A man must be almost insane to run such a risk, but

we know that men in real life as in books, do lose their heads over women. I think that Mr. Sheridan will try to marry the girl, eventually.

"It is not my place to offer you advice; but as no one knows the facts behind the story except myself, I trust you will excuse this liberty, from a man of the world who wishes to be your friend.

"You may not forgive your husband for so grave a breach of faith; but even so, why not join him to prevent the development of a scandal? Should you wish to free yourself later, you could do so in a far less disagreeable manner, which would repay you in the end for a delay: go to Reno.

"Again assuring you of my wish to help, I am,

"Yours sincerely,

"Eustace Nazlo.

"*P.S.* A letter or telegram, should you care to send one, will be forwarded by Cook at Monte Carlo. I may wander about the French and Italian Riviera, or go to Algiers, before returning to New York."

Betty's head whirled when she had read Nazlo's letter. She was furious with Miles, as indignant as if he had cruelly deceived a faithful wife. What he had done was monstrous! She had the impulse to write, pouring out her opinion of him, and calling a spade a spade. She even found herself composing sentences. And suddenly, to her own intense surprise, she began to cry.

Sobs tore her throat. She could hardly breathe. Tears streamed over her hot cheeks. Her first sobs over the loss of Paolo were childish, compared to these, for now she had lost everything.

As she wept, Betty remembered an old fable of which Mrs. Parmalee had reminded her when she was greedy, as a child; the fable of the dog crossing the bridge who dropped his meat to snatch at its reflection in the water. That was like what she had done!

She'd been delighted to let her husband go, so that she might have Paolo, and enough of Miles' money to keep Paolo true. But Paolo had betrayed her; and Miles, who pretended to be generous, was really throwing *her* over for a horrid, common little girl, who would some day live in this house and spend Miles' money.

Betty no longer laughed at Caroline Sheridan's advice. Nazlo—a man of the world—gave her the same, with a motive that appealed to her. Her mood changed from despair to frantic excitement. She had something to do that would distract her mind, and at the same time right the situation. She would go to Algiers and surprise Paolo—no, she would wire first to Nazlo and ask if he knew the route of "Silverwood." He was sure to know. Maybe Miles and the girl would be at Algiers also. . . . How wonderful if they were! She'd make sure first, before doing anything irrevocable, whether Paolo were really married. If not, and if he had a spark of love left for her, she'd win him back. Then she wouldn't care what scandal Miles brought upon his own head. But, if Paolo were married—she would punish him. She could ruin him with his father-in-law, and she would—she would! Also, she'd keep her husband for herself. She wouldn't divorce him, no matter what he had done. She would go on being Mrs. Miles Sheridan.

Her hands trembling, tears streaming down her face, she wrote a telegram to Nazlo. Then, she opened a

secret drawer within another drawer of her desk. A faint perfume stole out—Paul di Salvano's favourite fragrance. She kept a ribbon-tied packet of his love-letters steeped in it, like a mummy embalmed.

. . . . . .

Captain Yale's telegram from Algiers to Miles at Bousaada said: "Mrs. Sheridan just arrived unexpectedly from New York. Has come on board and occupies her old cabin. Asked for your address, but having instructions from you not give it to any one did not make exception even in her case."

The incredible thing had happened. Aunt Caroline had been a true prophet. Betty had come!—if the message told the truth.

Miles couldn't understand. He had laughed at his aunt, saying he'd believe in Betty's coming when he saw her on the yacht. But now he was forced to believe—unless the telegram was a forgery.

Even that seemed more likely than that Betty should be on board "Silverwood" at Algiers, for if she were there, it could mean only one thing; that she had changed her mind and did not want the divorce.

As he gave himself this ultimatum, a physical pang stabbed Sheridan to the heart. Salvano and that girl on the terrace of the St. George! . . . Had the man thrown Betty over for some one richer and younger, and did Betty mean to snatch her husband back?

It would be like her!

The thought of his wife's hidebound selfishness shook Miles with a spasm of repulsion. She had always sacrificed every one who came near, for herself. Even to satisfy some whim of an hour, she would steal the life's happiness of a friend. But she shouldn't steal his, he resolved fiercely.

It hadn't mattered before, how much he gave up for Betty's sake, since there was nothing he greatly cared for. But now there was Juliet. She was his, and he wouldn't give her up—to gratify that woman's jealous spite against the Italian.

"By God! if she won't divorce me, I'll divorce her!" he said, hotly. And then as before, came the still, small voice of the dead woman who had loved him as her own son: "Remember your promise."

XXXIII

THE struggle in Sheridan's mind did not end, when day came. It merely paused.

During the night he had dragged himself back a hundred times from the gulf of his promise to Mrs. Parmalee, and he had grasped at the hope that it wasn't Yale who sent the telegram. There was just one thing of which he was certain: nothing would make him give up Juliet Divine.

He made sure as early as possible that his wire to Yale had gone, and that it would be delivered within two hours. Then there was no more to be done, except to decide that he would keep the news—the *canard,* perhaps!—of Betty's arrival to himself. No use worrying Juliet nor letting her guess that he was worried!

Terry had had coffee and *petits pains* in her room, and was out on the balcony soon after eight. There Sheridan found the girl and made her realise that last night had been no dream. It was some words of hers which induced him to mention the telegram.

"I wish we needn't go back to Algiers for days and days!" she said. "Must we? This place seems—just to *belong* to happiness—and us!"

Then, after a second's hesitation, Miles said: "That's the way I feel. But—there's always a 'but,' worse luck!—I got a wire last night—too late to tell you—and I may have to run back to Algiers on important business. I hope not. It will be beastly to leave you. But if I must go, I don't see that I need be kept more than a few hours, so it will be best for you to stay

here and wait. What's the good of two long journeys for nothing! That is—well, we *do* want more of Bousaada, don't we? If we both went to Algiers, something would prevent us from coming back. And, anyhow, it wouldn't be the same a second time. If I must go, I want you waiting for me."

The roses of joy faded a little in Terry's cheeks. She couldn't bear to have him leave her. In the night she had waked from a dream, sobbing, because it seemed that she had to say good-bye to Miles. She loved Bousaada. The white village in the desert would be a place of magic for her as long as she lived, and the name would sound in her ears like the secret music of the sea in a shell. But she felt that she would hate being left there alone, or with Mrs. Harkness. She longed to go with Miles, even if they never came back, and she believed that he would take her if she asked. Yet she saw that he did not want her to go, and so she would not ask.

"I'll count the hours while you're gone," she said.

"And I'll drive all night to come home to you quickly," Miles answered. "But I still hope I won't have to go."

They had *déjeuner* together at half past twelve and no reply had come to Sheridan's telegram. As there were no private sitting rooms in the hotel, they ate in the *salle à manger,* alone save for one discouraged-looking French commercial traveller who "did" the desert towns, and four bachelor officers in the small garrison, for whom the hotel was a kind of club. Life at Bousaada was not very lively, for it was bad form to interest themselves in the girls of the Ouled Naïl; and from the table where the quartette sat they stared curiously at "la belle Americaine," as they had stared

during dinner last night. In fact, they stared even more, for one of their number, Captain Guilbert, had been in New York on a military mission in 1917, and he was sure he had seen the girl there, on the stage. It was in a *revue*. Her part had not been important, but she was prettier than the others, and of a better figure. Guilbert had asked questions of the man who took him, and had learned that the girl was well known. She was called by a droll nickname—a *nom de guerre:* "La Poupée de Million Dollars," or something like that. This Monsieur must be a millionaire to have enticed *cette jolie poupée* out of the shop window, to take this voyage. Some men, *n'est pas,* have all the luck!

Terry was interested in French officers, and glanced over now and then with a little-girl look in her eyes at the smartly uniformed young men. "That," murmured Guilbert to his comrades, who envied him his travels and knowledge of English, "that is what in *les Etats Unis* they call the stare of the 'baby vamp.' If that fellow who gives himself such airs of her owner, should go sick or have an accident, we should see something!"

Even as it was, they did see something; for while the four lingered over their dates and withered almonds, sipping bitter black coffee or smoking cheap cigarettes, a telegram was handed to *l'Americain* on a tray. He tore the folded and gummed blue paper apart and read the message hastily. The Frenchman saw the man's darkly tanned face grow red.

"I'm afraid, darling girl, that I'd better—that I'll have to go and attend to this business," Miles said, leaning across the small table. Terry half expected him to show the telegram to her, but he did not. He

sat frowning for a minute, and as if absentmindedly, tore the blue paper into tiny fragments. These he dropped into the ash-receiver that bore the advertisement of a long forbidden *liqueur,* and then—still as if thinking of something else—he set fire to the little heap with the end of his lighted cigarette.

"Well!" he exclaimed suddenly, looking up just when Terry had been adoring his thick, jet black eyelashes. "The sooner I start, the sooner I shall get back. The chauffeur knows we may have to go off at a few minutes' notice, so he'll be ready. I ought to be in Algiers by nine to-night, with luck. Maybe an hour or two there will be enough." (A vague idea of some heavy bribe beyond the dreams of alimony, flitted through his mind.) "If so, I'll be under way for Bousaada and *you* again, before midnight."

The room was warm with the December sunlight of the Algerian desert, but suddenly Terry felt cold. A slight shudder ran through her. Her mother used to say when she shivered so, that "a mouse had run over her grave."

"You'll be tired, dreadfully tired, if you motor all the rest of to-day, and all night too," she said. In the girl's heart, he was "my Prince"; but aloud she still called him "You," being too shy for the "darlings" and "dearests" which he showered upon her. Some day, when Juliet had given permission to tell the whole story (as of course she would give it when she knew!) then this adored hero of hers should know that he was the "Prince," and why.

"Tired?" mocked Sheridan. "As if I could be tired, coming back to you! You don't understand me yet. I'll make you, though, when I come—home. *This* is home while you're here. But we'll have a won-

derful home of our own some day, even better than this, and further away from the tiresome world, even if it's only on a yacht. Anyhow, it shan't be on "Silverwood." She has the wrong sort of associations now. I'd like never to go on board of her, to live, again. But we shall see. I'll have to be off now—and tell Harky to pack me a bag."

"Could *I* pack it?" Terry asked, blushing in that dawn-of-youth way that never ceased to strike Miles with half-sad wonder.

He gazed at the girl with great love in his eyes. The look almost frightened Terry, because it made their parting seem more serious—as if Miles, too, dreaded it, though he said it was nothing.

"Would you *like* to pack my bag?" he wanted to know, smiling.

"I'd love it," the girl confessed, as if she were ashamed, rather than proud. "It would be so good—so dear—to do some little thing for you."

"You have done the biggest thing for me that ever was done," Sheridan told her, under his breath. "But you shall do this little thing, too. Come along."

As they rose from the table and Miles pulled her chair back, a large yellow dog got up from his place on the floor at Captain Guilbert's feet. Terry looked at him, and he looked at her, wagging his tail. Terry loved dogs, though she had never been allowed to own one. "Dear thing!" she exclaimed, involuntarily.

The large, yellow dog wagged its tail again, and smiled. Yes, there was no doubt of that. It really smiled. Doubtless it had been taught to smile by someone who valued it. Terry was so charmed that she forgot for an instant the trouble in her mind. She paused on the threshold, and saw that the dog's master

was on his feet, bowing to her and Miles with French punctiliousness. She bowed in response, and smiled brightly. Captain Guilbert could hardly be expected to understand that the smile was entirely for his dog, not at all for him.

Harky was in her master's room most of the time while Terry packed the bag, showing the amateur what to put in, lest something of importance should be forgotten; but Miles found time to take the girl in his arms and kiss her as though for the last time on earth.

"I feel as if I couldn't let you go!" the words came as if they were forced from him.

"You don't—don't think that anything can possibly happen to keep you from coming back?" she implored, her arms round his neck.

"No—no! A thousand times no!" Sheridan assured her.

"You couldn't change your mind and take me with you?" Terry's longing got beyond control.

"I wish I could. But I'm sure it wouldn't be best," Miles said. "I'll telegraph, if it isn't too late when I get to Algiers. Then you ought to hear first thing in the morning. If not, before noon at latest. And —wire me this evening, will you?—but not to the yacht: address me at—the Hotel Cecil: I'll stay there, if I have to stay. Anyhow, I'll call."

He hadn't thought of this before. But he decided quickly.

"Oh, why not at the lovely St. George, with the terrace and garden, if you don't want to go out to the yacht?" asked Terry. "I'd like to think of you there."

"No," said Miles, "the St. George is too far from town for me this time." (He would not go to the place where he had seen Salvano.) "Be as happy as

you can, and the time will soon pass. Don't take any long walks alone without Harky—but short ones if you like, of course. I'm not a tyrant—yet! And—oh, darling, I talked to you about the Ouled Naïl girls here at Bousaada. I thought—then—you'd be interested in their dancing. But that was before *last night.* Now you're mine. If there's a dance, and any touting guide wants you to go, promise me you won't. After all, I don't care for you to see the show—anyhow without me."

Terry promised. "I shan't feel like seeing anything without you," she said.

Sheridan kissed her again. Oh, the sweetness of her! If only she had had no lurid past, he should be perfectly happy—in spite of Betty or anything Betty could do. But if there had been a different past, he might not have met her. He wasn't going to spoil Juliet's life or his own by brooding on what couldn't be changed. He had sworn to the girl last night not to do that, and he would stick to his word for both their sakes.

Terry came down to the entrance of the hotel to see him off, and his last glimpse of her as he turned back, was the waving of a tiny handkerchief. It fluttered like a white moth, and the sun turned her hair to gleaming copper. A tame gazelle that was the pet of the house had come to her in the hope of a date, or a lump of sugar to lick. The delicate form of the little animal leaned against the slight figure of the girl; and the big yellow dog that Miles had noticed in the dining-room was beside her too.

She looked like a young nymph, surrounded by her votaries, Miles thought, as the car swept the vision out of his sight, and he felt a thrill of peculiar ecstasy such

as he had never known before in thinking of a woman. But he would have experienced a less pleasant emotion had he seen the four young men who peeped out between the half-closed green shutters of the *salle à manger,* laughing and bantering each other; or if he could have heard what they said.

Captain Guilbert hurried out before the girl could escape by going upstairs. He made his dog an excuse.

XXXIV

"MADEMOISELLE!"

The French officer saluted. "I hope that this great beast of mine has not alarmed Mademoiselle? She speaks French?"

Terry's eyes were misty, for it was even worse than she had expected, to see Miles go away—far away through the desert. Her life went with him! It was difficult to come back, and to speak just then. But this, no doubt, was a brave soldier of France. She must not seem rude and hurt his feelings, so she smiled, almost the same smile as that which Captain Guilbert had thought the professional smile of the "baby vamp."

"I learned French at school," she said, "from a dear French nun, a Parisienne. It's nice to hear the language, and speak it again. Your dog hasn't frightened me at all, Monsieur *le Capitaine.* I never saw a dog before who really smiled."

Guilbert was delighted with her friendliness, which he attributed to his own good looks and charm which, he was confident, few women could resist. He had expected her to snap at his advances; but just in case he should have deceived himself, he had sent the dog out as an excuse to enter into conversation quickly, before the girl should go upstairs. It was according to his experience that *ces jolies dames* were keen on a chance for a little forbidden fun when the men of whom they had tired left them alone for a few hours or days. His comrades, two lieutenants and the military surgeon attached to the regiment, had

bet that *la belle Americaine* would snub him, and he knew that, even more than in winning his money, they would be pleased if he failed with the young woman. He had to rush things a little, but he was sure now that he was on safe ground.

"It is a trick I have taught the animal," Guilbert explained. "He is only a *Pi* dog, such as the nomads keep to guard their tents, but I have had him since he was a puppy. Besides, if he had never been taught, he would still smile at Mademoiselle!"

"Thank you," said Terry, blushing. "I like him so much. But now I must go in, Monsieur *le Capitaine.*"

"Not yet, I beg!" exclaimed Guilbert, throwing himself between her and the door. He assumed acquaintance by passing instantly from the third person to the second. "If you only knew, Mademoiselle, what it is to a soldier imprisoned in the desert, to see a beautiful woman in this wilderness! Here we have only the Arab girls, and perhaps the wives of two or three brother officers, to speak to from month's end to month's end. And for some reason one's brother officers never seem to marry pretty women! Or else the women are too old. But you, Mademoiselle, you are a fresh rose in a sandy waste. Besides, I must tell you that I have had the great pleasure of seeing you before. I went to New York in 1917, after the Americans entered our War. At the theatre one night I was dazzled by a vision; a living statue of such perfection that I lost my sleep thinking of it. Your beauty of face and form could never be forgotten. To-day I was struck as with a bomb—thrown by Venus! To find you again—at the end of the world! It is Destiny!"

The words poured out, and Terry's breath was taken away. This man in the desert had been to New York!

He was one of those who had seen Julia! What should she do? What would Julia do in her place?

These were her first thoughts, the broken thoughts of an inexperienced child who knew nothing of men, and who had only instinct to help her separate insolence from compliment. But in the man's eyes began to burn the fire she had seen in Nazlo's eyes and (she wished to forget it!) in Sheridan's for one ugly moment. The girl shrank from it with all that was delicate in her nature and upbringing. Horrid as it was to be rude to a soldier who had fought and suffered, Terry knew that she had to keep him back.

"I am sure, Monsieur *le Capitaine,*" she said, "that you mean to be kind, but—but you see we don't know each other. Please let me go in—now!"

She spoke gently, yet with an air of firmness which was a cold douche for Guilbert. It was a shock to him, but he shook it off as his dog would shake off a splash of iced water. He knew, as if he had looked in their direction, that his three comrades who were not his friends (jealous, he thought them!) were peering through the shutters of the *salle à manger,* cigarettes caught between their teeth, ready to jeer if he were "turned down." One did not take young ladies like these at their first word!

"Do not break my heart," he implored, in a low tone which he knew how to use at right moments. "Mademoiselle, I have admired—adored—you for all these years, and you come to me in the flesh younger and lovelier than when I saw you first. I can't let you go from me. No, it is not meant to be so! Beautiful dream of my heart, do not be too cruel to one who has gone through much in these years: only a poor soldier in the desert, yet a man! And love in the desert, be-

lieve me, is beyond any love you have known, though you have been much loved and by many—"

One of the sudden rages that came to her blood from Terence Desmond, poured through the girl like a flame. She looked at Guilbert as she had looked at Nazlo. *"Taisez vous! Allez vous ont!"* she flung at him between her teeth: and as he fell back from the insult she passed him like a flash.

He hated her so for the words a French woman would hardly use to a servant, that he would have liked to set his dog on her as she dashed into the hall and up the stairs. He could not do that. Perhaps the dog would not have obeyed the order, if he had dared to give it. But what he could do, as the blood slowly subsided from forehead and ears, was to saunter back into the *salle à manger,* laughing softly. "We were getting on well, when the ancient duenna beckoned her from the stairs," he explained to the others. "The old woman is of course in the pay of the master and I should have been more careful. But all is not lost. On the contrary! I have till to-morrow to win or lose, is it not, my old ones?"

Something in Terry told her that the man would be laughing and boasting to his friends, and she hated him as he hated her. She would have liked to strike him hard, and hurt him. If the dog had been hers! . . . Oh, she was almost frightened at the thoughts that came!

By this time she had rushed through her bedroom and onto the balcony which was like her own now, because only her window, Sheridan's and Harky's looked out upon it. She stood grasping the rail for steadiness, and her knuckles were white. The man—his eyes—! Besides, there had been Nazlo. He, too, the first time

when he had got her alone. . . . And *he* hadn't then mistaken her for Julia, as this man had, and Miles! She felt soiled, as if she could never be washed clean.

The peace of the desert was gone. What was there about her, she wondered, and about Julia? What was there strange, bad? Was she herself *terrible* somehow, without knowing why or in what way? Every one seemed to take her badness so for granted: Nazlo—Miles at first, though he had forgiven her, through love: Miss Caroline Sheridan: people to whom she had never spoken, who stared rudely: men with a bold, hungry look: women with curiosity or scorn. And even Mrs. Harkness, who had grown fond of her, it seemed, was sorry that Sheridan had given his love to such a one as she. There must be something more than just the "boldness" of coming on this trip.

"I don't believe I am going to be happy after all—here or anywhere, ever," she said. "I see now that I'm not fit for Miles. Not fit! . . . He'll be taken away from me by God—or Fate, that the horrid Frenchman talked about. The wonderful thing was too good to come true . . . too good . . . to come true."

She had feared this in the night, as she lay awake, listening to her own heart. But it was Captain Guilbert who had driven the keen realisation home.

. . . . . .

Miles had travelled only far enough to have the strange, table mountains at his back, when a tire punctured in the hot sand. The car had been going at such a pace that the pneumatic tore before the chauffeur could pull up. There was no Stepney, and Sheridan foresaw three-quarters of an hour delay. He offered

help, but the chauffeur politely refused, and Miles walked restlessly about, picking up desert crystals of odd shapes here and there to take back to Terry (she would like them!) examining without much interest the low-growing wild flowers, and glancing at his watch.

He never went out of sight from the car, as he did not wish to waste a needless moment. But half an hour passed and the chauffeur was still frantically at work, dripping sweat in the afternoon heat. It had occurred to Miles to offer aid again, when another motor came bumping over the stony desert with its little patches of rough grass. It was a small, bright red car, and looked like one he had seen in the garage where he had hired his. A moment later the two occupants—both men, and in the front seat—caught sight of the stationary vehicle and slowed down.

"Yes, that's the one I saw," Sheridan decided. "I suppose the chauffeur recognises my Itala, and means to stop."

The thought had hardly passed through his head when the scarlet automobile came level with him and his eyes met those of the man sitting beside the driver. It was Nazlo.

Somehow, Sheridan felt no surprise. He was aware that Nazlo had been following his itinerary since Monte Carlo.

Last night he had been ready to believe that this man had sent him a telegram in the name of Captain Yale, saying that Betty was on board "Silverwood." Now, he knew through the reply to his wire received at luncheon, that the massage had come from Yale; yet it was possible that Nazlo had met Betty in Algiers,

and had taken it pretty well for granted that her errant husband would rush back from Bousaada to see what she was doing there.

As for how Nazlo had found out about his being in Bousaada, that was easy: Sheridan had told himself this in suspecting the origin of the telegram. Learning that the owner of "Silverwood," his companion and the maid had gone off the yacht and left Algiers by motor, Nazlo would only have had to visit one or two garages to learn the car's destination. Then it would be like him to think of coming down and catching Juliet Divine alone!

Nazlo spoke a word to his chauffeur. The red car drew up sharply, and the Shoe King sprang out.

"How do you do, Mr. Sheridan?" he said, in the civil yet reserved tone one uses to a distant acquaintance. "I thought it possible we might meet somewhere along this route between Algiers and Bousaada, but I'm sorry to see your auto's in trouble. Can we be of any assistance?"

"No, thanks," Miles answered, gruffly. His mind was working fast. He did not want Nazlo to go to Bousaada, but it was difficult to see just how to stop him without a vulgar quarrel.

The possibility of a fight suggested itself to Sheridan: but he had that sharp sense of humour which maddeningly interferes with violence. He saw with his mental eyes a ridiculous, brutal picture of himself pummelling an older man with his fists, while two chauffeurs looked on, grinning, storing up stories to tell in Algiers. . . . No. He must try some other way.

"I'm not much surprised to see you, either, as it happens," he retorted, with no attempt to hide his feel-

ings. "In the circumstances, it's about what I might expect."

"What circumstances?" Nazlo enquired, with a cool politeness that made Miles long to strike the dark, Greek face. "I don't know that I quite understand what you mean, Mr. Sheridan."

"Don't you?" asked Miles. "If you'll take a short stroll with me I'll tell you exactly what I mean."

"With pleasure," Nazlo civilly replied.

Sheridan's hands tingled. But he choked his temper down, and the two walked out of earshot from both cars, whose chauffeurs at once joined forces.

"You've been following me about for some time," Miles began, "and guessing I was likely to leave Miss Divine in Bousaada, because of—business in Algiers, perhaps you thought you'd run down and thrust yourself upon her when she had no protection."

As he spoke, his eyes, under frowning brows, dared Nazlo's to meet them. And Nazlo's did meet them with an infuriating calmness and benevolence.

XXXV

"MR. SHERIDAN," the Greek said (he had an irritating trick of repeating a name). "I do not follow you. Why should I? I know you only by name, though I've met your wife. The one I'm following is the young lady with you. I tell you that frankly. But not to persecute her, when she's unprotected. I want to *offer* her protection—the protection of a husband, which you can't give. And her name, as you know, *isn't* Juliet Divine."

Each sentence beat on Sheridan's ears as with a tap from a hammer. The force of the situation swept over him like the rush of a wave, and almost carried him off his feet.

"You damned scoundrel!" he flung at Nazlo.

The Greek smiled. "That's just the expression I'd apply to you if I hadn't got the whip hand of my temper, Mr. Sheridan? *You're* the villain of this piece! You take a young girl under age, just out of a convent on board your yacht. You—"

"In the devil's name what are you talking about?" It came to Sheridan's mind that Nazlo was insane. But those words, "just out of a convent," struck him sharply. The convent that Juliet so often harped upon!

"Ah, this whole business—*yours,* not mine!—is 'in the devil's name,'" the other caught him up. "I believe you can be arrested for kidnapping."

"Are you a madman?" The question came from Miles' bewilderment.

"No. I'm neither mad, nor bad," said Nazlo, keep-

ing his coolness, and not changing colour, though Sheridan was pale with the grey-brown pallor of a darkly tanned face. "I want to marry Miss Desmond, who's travelling with you under the name of Juliet Divine."

He had Miles at a deadly disadvantage. He hit below the belt. Sheridan was half stunned. All desire to fight had died in him. There was something sinister to be found out, and he had to get at it.

"The lady you speak of *is* Miss Divine," he insisted. "And I'm going to marry her myself."

Nazlo laughed a short, ugly laugh. "I daresay you *want* to marry her. But you wouldn't, if you didn't know what a different proposition she is from Juliet Divine: and you *can't* marry her, for the reason that your wife has given up the idea of divorce. I've seen Mrs. Sheridan and discussed things with her after an exchange of letters. I know what I'm talking about. You're bound. I'm free—"

"If my wife won't divorce me, I—there are other ways."

The words spoke themselves.

"Don't be afraid," Nazlo said, "to speak before me. I've deduced the whole story of your trip, anyhow the part where your wife is concerned. Ostensibly you started with a companion to give Mrs. Sheridan a pretext for divorce. That would have been a fair game if you'd had Juliet Divine or one of her sort, but taking this young girl—great heavens, I can't talk of it calmly! The one bit of good in the black business is this: you've put yourself beyond the pale. Your wife's flirtations —she swears they're no worse, and you can prove nothing—why, they're as grains of sand beside Mont Blanc compared with your sin. If Mrs. Sheridan won't free you—and she won't—you *can't* free yourself."

"I wonder I don't kill you!" Miles said, with sudden coolness. He felt frozen.

"You'd find it difficult, with two witnesses close by."

"It would be a pleasure to go to the chair for you," Sheridan heard himself say.

"I've got an automatic on me, I warn you," exclaimed Nazlo, with the first sign of nervousness. "But cut this drivel. We're not schoolboys. I repeat; I can marry Miss Desmond, if she'll have me—and I think she will when she knows what she's up against—whereas you can't. You'd ruin her. I can save her."

"Why do you persist in calling her Miss Desmond—as you did at Monte Carlo?" Sheridan asked, calm now, as he seemed to hear a faint echo of the name "Desmond," sounding far off in his mind.

"I call her that because it's her name, as you know well."

"I don't know. Because you tell me this, do you think—"

"What I think is, that you're bluffing, Mr. Sheridan. I'd do the same in your place—if I *could* be in such a place! You can't have been deceived for long about the girl, even if she was palmed off on you at first as the person you wanted for this job. Once you met her, you'd have seen—"

"I never saw Miss Divine, to my knowledge, till after she came on board my yacht."

"Miss Divine never came on board your yacht. Why, I *know* this child—this convent child! I met her at her father's house. She's ten years younger than Juliet Divine, and innocent of the world as a kitten—or was, till you got her. I don't need to tell *you* that!"

"My God!" muttered Sheridan. Scoundrel the man might be, but there was a ring of truth in his voice.

A hundred memories rushed over Miles; the look of virginal youth about the girl which had struck him so incongruously at first; all her sweet ways of a child: her chatter of the nuns and the convent: her talk of religion that night of the storm: her seeming horror when he had insulted her with his rough kiss: Harky's bewilderment, and defence of the girl after a time of respectable stand-offishness: the old woman's belief that "the poor little thing hadn't a cent": and that indignant refusal of ten thousand dollars: all these ways of an ingénue which Phillips had warned him would be displayed to snare him.

Had he been a blind fool? But how could he have guessed? . . . Was it true? Could Phillips himself have been bamboozled? Wasn't this tirade an attempt at blackmail from Nazlo? Why should an innocent girl named Desmond have come for a yachting cruise alone with him, in the place of Juliet Divine? Desmond . . . Desmond! Had he some forgotten association with that name?

Bewildered, Sheridan asked himself these questions: yet the inner self that was his real self knew suddenly and surely that the girl he loved was not Juliet Divine. He could have groaned aloud, shamed by past thoughts of her, past deeds towards her. It atoned not at all that in spite of reason he'd asked her to marry him, for had he not done it as a high favour, from a knight to a beggar maid, admiring his own chivalry? How could she have forgiven and loved him? . . . He ought to have guessed, in spite of Phillips' warnings. He ought to have *known*. It was horrible to have the truth thrown at him, like a bone to a dog, by Nazlo. His spirit rushed back through the golden silence of the desert and flung itself at the girl's feet.

"You have to admit that you do know," Nazlo's hard voice crashed into his thoughts.

Miles stared at him with such anguish in his eyes that the truth flashed upon the Greek as that other truth had flashed upon Sheridan. He saw through a dazzle of blinding light that Miles Sheridan had not known the girl's identity. To him the other seemed a fool, and to the Shoe King a fool was some degrees below a knave. Yet Nazlo was human, and a faint twinge of pity surprised him—contemptuous pity.

"I admit—now," Miles said, "I must have been a fool *not* to know. I believe what you tell me. But I wish to God I hadn't heard it from you, of all people. For you to accuse me is—like the pot calling the kettle black—isn't it? She—Miss Desmond, you name her—shrank from you at Monte Carlo. You must have noticed that. I asked her a question. She wouldn't say much—but she answered. I—though I didn't know what she was, as you did—I showed her more respect than she had from you. Part of our business arrangement was—that I should keep away from Miss Divine, except in public."

"Yet you came near enough to ask her to marry you! —unless you did *that* in public?"

"Circumstances arose—unexpectedly."

"Circumstances always do arise! They did with me. Miss Desmond gave me no time to say I'd marry her if she'd have me. She misunderstood the situation."

"I've heard you had a wife."

"I had. She's dead."

Nazlo did not add the date of his bereavement.

"I'm free," he went on. "You're not, and can't be while your wife's on earth—where she's likely to stay

as long as you do. Now you know why I'm following Miss Desmond, and why I'm going to her to-day."

"You shall not go!" Miles exclaimed.

Nazlo laughed. "Why not?"

"She doesn't want to see you."

"She can say so after I've arrived and written her a note. When she understands, I think she'll look on me as the big chance to—as the French say—*'ranger'* herself. Anyhow *you've* no right to decide for the girl and deny her what you can't give."

Strange, how many thoughts can rush through a man's brain while another might count One—Two—Three!

Miles would not confess that he was caught in a net which couldn't be broken, or torn, or cut. Yet he knew that, if Nazlo had spoken the truth about Betty, and about the girl, he was hopelessly bound. Because he'd flaunted Juliet Divine in the face of the world to free Betty, the law would forbid him to free himself from her, unless she sued for divorce. Even the breaking of his promise to Mrs. Parmalee wouldn't help him as things were—according to Eustace Nazlo. The girl he loved could never be his wife, and he loved her too well to take her as his mistress, though she might love him enough to consent.

"You have the right to go to Bousaada," he admitted harshly. "But I have the right to get there before you, if I can."

"What!" exclaimed Nazlo. "You'd go back? You'd give up seeing your wife in Algiers?"

"I'll see my wife later, if she's in Algiers. You shall not find Miss—the woman I love—alone if I can help it."

As he spoke he turned on his heel, and walked with

long strides to his automobile. The chauffeur had finished work some minutes ago and strolled over to the small red car with his mate from the Algiers garage.

Nazlo wheeled round at the same instant. "Race me for Bousaada then!" he shouted.

Again his was the advantage. He was within a dozen yards of his own car. Sheridan had three times the distance to cover. Nazlo's car was headed for Bousaada, Sheridan's for Algiers, and the road wasn't made for the quick turn of an automobile, especially a large one. Nazlo's chauffeur was close to his motor, and had not stopped the engine. Sheridan's car had to be started as well as turned, and by a man who would take more than sixty seconds to reach it.

A shout of *"Partons—vite!"* from his employer sent the driver of the red auto with a bound to his place. Nazlo sprang up beside him, and the little car darted away over sandy ruts, stones, and hummocks of grass, with spasmodic leaps. There was no speed limit here in the desert except that set by the roughness of the wild way, or the sudden mixing up with a string of loaded camels!

By the time Sheridan's motor had started, refused, started again, backed, manœuvred, backed once more, and successfully turned, the small red car had half a mile's start.

There was no room in Miles' thoughts for fear of what might happen because of his delay in seeing Betty. If things concerning her were as bad as they could be, at least they couldn't be worse! And he must get back to the girl. He must tell his side of the story before Nazlo had thrown the wrong light on it all. He must know why Juliet Divine had sent her cruising with him—why she'd consented to come. Above all he

must somehow get her forgiveness, even if he couldn't beg for it in words.

If he had not turned back to Bousaada then—if he had gone on instead to Algiers, the whole future might have been different for him, for Terry Desmond, and for others. But Fate rules these decisions, not idle Chance.

XXXVI

WHEN Nazlo, sallow with blown sand, jumped out of his car at the hotel in Bousaada, he enquired discreetly for Monsieur Sheridan. Monsieur had departed *en automobile,* he was informed, some hours ago, and Mademoiselle accompanied by Madame had gone down to the river a short time since. Monsieur expected to be absent for the night, but *ces dames* would return after sunset and moonrise for dinner.

"I'll go and find them. You can send a boy part way to show me the shortest road," Nazlo said. "I want two rooms in the hotel, for myself and chauffeur for a night or so; maybe more. The best you have; but I won't stop now to look at them, thanks."

"The shortest road" was important to him! Unless the big motor suffered a providential *panne,* Sheridan might arrive within the next quarter hour. Nazlo thought he could count upon fifteen minutes' start of the heavier car despite its high power, for his chauffeur had earned a big bribe by tearing along the vile road as a large automobile couldn't do without risk of a smash. And many backward looks had shown Nazlo only empty desert.

Sheridan must come to the hotel when he arrived, as he—Nazlo—had come, there to learn that the girl wasn't in the house. He would even have an extra delay, because he would first seek her in her room, discover her absence, and waste more time in enquiries. Altogether, it looked as if Nazlo might get twenty

minutes with Terry before he was disturbed. A good deal could be done in twenty minutes!

. . . . . .

The joy of the desert had gone for the girl. She was in the darkest mood of her life, the black gloom of youth which can never, it seems, be lightened.

Her sister Julia was a woman whom any man was free to insult! She herself, though her one sin had been against the conventions, wasn't the right wife for Miles Sheridan. He ought not to love her. She ought not to let him love her. It would be better for him if he never saw her again. She couldn't desert him, when his back was turned, but she wished that she might die —a quick death without too much pain, lest she shouldn't be brave;—die before Miles came back. Then, at the thought of losing him, of being gone out of his world while she was so young, tears filled her eyes. But she would not let them fall. Mrs. Harkness mustn't see that she'd been crying, and ask questions! The kind old woman was sure to knock at the door sooner or later, and it would be worse to keep her out than to let her in.

Harky imagined, however, that the girl might be resting in the heat of the day, and accordingly left her in peace. It was late in the afternoon when she tapped, and then Terry was glad to go out. They walked under big sunshades to the river, and sat in the purple shadow of a little sandy hillock, watching the Arab children play—some almost naked, others dressed like grown women in bizarre draperies, bright-tinted as poppies. Terry had brought a letter-pad and a stylographic pen, to write to Julia, and ask permission to tell Sheridan who she was. Even though she mustn't marry him, she longed to let him know that she was the child he

had named "Cinderella." Harky had brought a book about Ireland: but neither could concentrate. It was easier to gaze at the children.

As the sun went down the sky became a vast canopy of roses that gave colour to the sand, and even the air seemed pink. The brown babies laughed and crowed to each other with the same laughter, the same accents that white babies have all over the world, no matter what their nation: and the girl and the old woman did not know that footsteps hurrying towards them from behind meant anything special for them till Nazlo's voice spoke.

He had expected Mrs. Harkness to be with Terry, and was glad of her presence, for the old woman was his friend. He had shown her kindness, motoring her from the Port of Monaço to Mentone, and she had been grateful—effusively so for her.

"Miss Desmond!"

Terry turned sharply, recognising the voice. It seemed the limit of everything she could go through, and even beyond, that Nazlo should be at Bousaada—to-day.

Mrs. Harkness turned too, and remembered the face of the kind gentleman with the nice motor car at Monaco Port. She thought he had told her then that he knew Mr. Sheridan, and that he had some acquaintance with Miss Divine. But it was queer he should call her "Miss Desmond" now. Maybe he'd made a mistake; yet it seemed impossible to mistake this beautiful girl for some one else.

"Good evening, sir!" the old woman mechanically exclaimed, and Nazlo, with a pleasant smile, hat in hand, acknowledged the acquaintance cordially. Terry

did not speak, but he had no time to lose, and he began with the words he had planned.

"Forgive me if I've frightened you, but I was coming to Bousaada to see Mr. Sheridan on a matter of importance—to him: and I met him on the way. We had a conversation—a sort of heart-to-heart talk, because I'd been sent to him by his wife. You know she's in Algiers?—on board the yacht."

"Mrs. Miles on board 'Silverwood'!" gasped Harky. "Oh, sir, this is strange news! Are you sure?"

"Quite sure. I've seen and talked with her," replied Nazlo, addressing himself now to Mrs. Harkness, though he knew that Terry listened. "You must excuse me for being abrupt, but I have to hurry and say what I've got to say. I know Mr. Sheridan's been expecting his wife to divorce him, and he thought she was in New York. But I'm surprised he didn't tell you what called him suddenly back to Algiers. He must have had a telegram, maybe from the yacht's captain. But he didn't know what brought Mrs. Sheridan until I gave him a message—by her request. You see, I've known her for years. She's decided not to divorce her husband, and nothing will induce her to change her mind. I don't doubt Mr. Sheridan will try to bribe her, but he won't succeed. And owing to circumstances which we needn't go into just now, the law wouldn't allow him to divorce his wife, even if he tried. Naturally this is a blow to him, as he wants—he confided in me—to marry. He won't be able to do that while Mrs. Sheridan lives; which means"—he turned to the girl—"dear Miss Desmond—that if you wait for him you'll grow old waiting."

Terry had told herself that she must not marry Miles,

but suddenly she knew that she *would* have married him in spite of everything if he had been free. Perhaps it was well that he was not to be free—well for his own good, because he was saved from her.

"Oh, my poor child!" gasped Mrs. Harkness.

The old woman had been divided in mind between her strong wish for the girl's happiness as well as "Mr. Miles' welfare," and her equally strong disapproval of such an unsuitable match. But now she forgot all scruples. She hated that wicked little cat of a Mrs. Miles more than ever! "My poor child!" she moaned. "What will you do? Everything's upset."

"I don't know what I shall do," said Terry. "I'll have to wait till he—Mr. Sheridan—comes back, and I can talk to him. I can't decide now."

"But he and I agreed that you'd better decide," Nazlo urged. "He can do nothing for you, Miss Desmond—less than nothing! My poor girl, you're in a bad position. It won't do! Mrs. Harkness—that *is* the name, isn't it?—can tell you that. All the *raison d'être* for being on the yacht is gone. Mr. Sheridan can't offer you anything except money—that is, if he's an honourable man he can't, now he knows who you are—"

"He knows who I am?" the girl broke in.

"He said he hadn't known. But he knows now—"

"You told him!" she caught the man up. And a giddiness came over her as she thought what the words meant—more, far more than Nazlo could guess. *Miles knew!* At this very moment, the thing she had longed to tell and dared not, was in his mind. What would he think—what would he say when he came back—*her Prince?*

"Yes, I told him," Nazlo admitted. "I must confess I did Sheridan an injustice. I thought he'd known all

along—who you are, and everything else which is still a mystery to me; why you came with him on this trip and all that. My child, I was never the wicked wolf you believed me when you ran away. I lost my head that night, and you didn't give me time to explain. I've been looking for you half across the world. It almost bowled me over to see you at last at Monte Carlo—though of course I knew you might come there, or I wouldn't have gone. And not to have a chance for a word! You made me suffer, all right. If I deserved punishment, I got mine! But I didn't deserve it, I swear! . . . Oh, Mrs. Harkness, I want you to hear all this. In a way, you're this child's guardian—the only one she's got. I want to take the job over. I want to protect her. Maybe Sheridan meant well—in the end. But he's down and out now. He'll never be free; Teresa, I ask you to marry me. Not a word shall be said against you, not a finger pointed. Everything I have shall be yours—and I tell you, my name's a protection. You'll be Mrs. Eustace Nazlo. That means you'll be out of this mess the same as if you'd never been in it. You'll be saved and Sheridan will be saved. He can't be prosecuted for kidnapping a child under age if that child is my wife. You don't care for me. But I hope I can make you. And you *do* care for your good name. . . . Now, Mrs. Harkness, you've heard me out. You're a wise woman, with experience of this world and—I guess—respect for the next one. What do you advise for Miss Desmond?"

He had half sat, half knelt, on the sand near the girl and the old woman. Now it was to the latter he turned, knowing that Terry's answer, if it came quickly, would not be what he wished and meant in the end to have.

Harky stared, almost dazed by the burst of eloquence which she understood only in part. Her heavy brows drew together in an anxious frown, her long-lipped mouth hung slightly open. She had no consciousness of self. She felt overwhelmed with the news about "Mr. Miles," and its consequences for her adored nurseling, her master. Only secondary was her interest in the girl, but, even so, it was strong. Prayerfully she wished well for her charge; yet far more she wished "Mr. Miles" to be happy, not only happy but honourable and right-living. If it were true that he wasn't to be free, even in the repulsive half-freedom which divorce meant to her mind, then it was clear, for both their sakes, that he and this love of his must part. Besides, that hint about "prosecution" frightened her.

"Miss Desmond—Miss Desmond!" she echoed, mechanically. "Miss Divine, you're talking about. And I—"

"Miss Desmond's her real name," Nazlo cut in quickly. "But we won't stop to discuss that part of the story now. What I want in a hurry is your advice to her. What's it to be, Mrs. Harkness? Isn't the best way out for her to marry me?"

"With God's help, I—I say it is!" the old woman stammered. "It does look like the best—it looks like the *only* way out, for Mr. Miles' good as well as for hers!"

XXXVII

THERE was silence for a moment.

The sun had gone, all but a crown of reddish gold with a tuft of crimson clouds like the spreading crown-plumes of an Ouled Naïl queen. The chill of night had suddenly fallen, and it seemed to Terry that there were tiny prickles of ice in her veins. She wished that the dusk which poured over the low river bed in a violet flood were a wave that would drown her and sweep her body away.

"Well?" asked Nazlo at last. "Aren't you going to answer, my little girl? You can't say, now you know everything, that I don't deserve an answer, can you?"

"Perhaps you deserve one," Terry answered heavily. "But I can't give it to-night. Or if I do, it will be no —no! I'd rather go back to the convent, and take the veil, and stay there forever, than have to marry a man I don't love—when I do love some one else."

"But loving that Some One will make you more wretched than you are," Nazlo said, kindly. "And *he'd* be better off by far if you were married. He'd have to stop thinking of you and trying to see you. At least, he would if he's made of the strong stuff I think he is. Am I right about him, Mrs. Harkness?"

"Ye-es," the old woman admitted, "I'm bound to say I believe you are. Oh, it's all round a sad business!"

"We must make the best of it—and make it *for* the best," went on Nazlo. "If you care more for Sheridan than for yourself, my child, your answer to me will—"

"I do care more for him than for myself, of course.

But I won't give you any answer now," Terry persisted, with her mother's quiet obstinacy. "I'll have to think first."

"You mean you want to talk things over with Sheridan?"

This decision was a blow to Nazlo, for he had tried to "rush" the girl with his generosity and his arguments falling on top of the sensational news. He had thrown all his vitality into the battle, hoping to win before the other man came to fight on her side. Then, if she had already been persuaded by his—Nazlo's—eloquence and the old woman's scruples to promise, Sheridan would have been up against a *fait accompli.*

"Yes, I must talk things over with Mr. Sheridan," Terry answered: and as she rose to walk away, Nazlo muttered: "Damn!" beneath his breath. His one consolation was that, even if *he* didn't get her, she was pretty certain now not to give herself to Sheridan.

Mrs. Harkness stumbled up too, with a creaking of her joints, to return with Terry to the hotel, and Nazlo was prepared to go with them. But the girl stopped, looking back at him.

"Please don't come," she said. "Maybe I've thought bad things about you I oughtn't to have thought, Mr. Nazlo. If I have, I'm sorry. But I—I can't think at *all* if you're with me! I'll have to be alone for a while!"

She hurried on ahead of Mrs. Harkness, who relaxed her effort to keep pace when she heard the last words. The old woman was rheumatic, and sitting on the sand had reminded her forcibly that her legs were not as supple as they had been. Also her feet had "gone to sleep"; and as the girl almost ran to the hotel the two left behind joined forces, Harky hobbling along to get

rid of the "pins and needles," Nazlo tactfully taking step for step, though he yearned to be at the side of the flying form ahead.

He was glad, however, to find how thoroughly Mrs. Harkness was his advocate, in what she called the "sad circumstances"; and he was relieved not to see Sheridan's big car drawn up in front of the hotel door as they came in sight of it.

"The fellow must have had another breakdown," he assured himself. "If not, by this time he'd have come."

But Sheridan had come.

The car had brought him to the hotel and left him there before Nazlo and Mrs. Harkness had reached a spot where they could see the entrance—even before Terry, walking fast and far ahead, had got within sight of it. When the girl ran upstairs to the refuge of her own room, she saw Sheridan standing in front of the door as if he had just knocked and were awaiting an answer.

"You!" she exclaimed. "I thought you were—"

"Nearly at Algiers!" Miles finished for her. "But I needed to see you again before I went there."

It was twilight in the corridor, for the lights were not yet turned on, and they had the place to themselves. Though the girl had retreated from him a little way, with one step Sheridan caught her in his arms.

"My darling! My dearest! My little child!" he crooned over her, with such tenderness as she had never known. "Thank God I've got you again! I don't deserve you, but I'm going to try hard. Can you ever forgive me for my blindness—for everything? Let me take you into your room, where we can talk and not

be disturbed. I want to go down on my knees to you, girl, and tell you what I feel."

"Come, then," Terry said. "We *must* talk! But you shan't go on your knees. And there's nothing to forgive. I've told you that before."

He freed her from his arms, but her hand trembled so that he took the key from it and unlocked the door. She led the way into the plain white room, and he followed closely. The door shut behind them, but the long French window was wide open, letting in a wonderful, ethereal light, ashes of roses from the sunset, blending with the moon's silver. It seemed to Sheridan that in this radiance the girl's beauty was not of earth.

He would have taken her in his arms again, but very gently she pushed him back. "Wait!" she put him off. "Please—if you love me! There are things to say—for us both. Is it true, what Mr. Nazlo has said—just now when he came, and Mrs. Harkness and I were sitting by the river?"

"So he found you first!" Miles exclaimed. "It was ten to one that he would—with the start he got. I suppose the brute told you what he started from Algiers to tell—that my wife (if I must call her that!) is on the yacht waiting for me, and that she's changed her mind about the divorce? I don't know whether the last part's true or not, because I've only Nazlo's word for it. We met when my car was in trouble, and he said he'd seen—her in Algiers. Yale wired me that she was on board 'Silverwood.' That's why I started in such a rush,—I knew something must be up, and the sooner I faced it the better. Very likely it *is* true she's changed her mind, for it wouldn't have done Nazlo much good, for long, to spring the story on me if there were nothing in it. But it was other things he said

that brought me back to you. If it had been only the divorce, probably I'd have pounded on to Algiers faster than before—even at the price of letting him find you here alone. When I realised all you had to forgive me, I couldn't wait till to-morrow for your pardon, and to make sure I had your love whatever happened. Child, how could I have thought you were Juliet Divine? Why did I let an *idée fixe* get between my eyes and my common sense? I went blundering ahead, taking it for granted that you were what I expected you to be, in spite of your sweet, innocent ways, and a thousand things that ought to have shown me the fool I was. I misconstrued everything. I thought you were playing the ingénue,—for a purpose. I—God forgive me—I don't see how *you* ever can! But why, why did you take that woman's place on my yacht, and run such risks, and let me believe you were—what I did believe, even when love took me and tried to make me a decent man?"

While he stammered on, he did go down on one knee, as the girl stood by the window, winding his arms round her waist, and pressing her close against his heart. Terry no longer struggled to free herself. As he looked up into her face, she laid her hands on his smooth, dark head, as if to bless him.

"Why, I did it all because Julia said I could help you," she explained, almost in a whisper. "I loved you so much—I owed you so much—I would have done *anything* for you! I didn't realise at first quite what—what it would be like on the yacht, or how people would act—or how hard it would be not to tell you the truth about myself. But I'd promised Julia not to tell, and I wouldn't—till I heard from her—if Mr. Nazlo hadn't told already. Even now I don't understand about Julia

—why it should be so awful to be mistaken for her—"

The last words, spoken quickly, tumbling over each other like ripples in a wind-blown brook—had passed by Sheridan's brain, though his ears must have heard them.

"You loved me so much—you owed me so much?" he echoed.

"Oh, yes! I can tell you now. You were always my Prince, ever since I first saw you, when I was so tiny. Did you know—or had you forgotten all about your little Cinderella you were so good to years ago?"

"Cinderella!" he repeated.

"Oh!" Terry's voice, that had held a trembling note of happiness in her memories, broke with disappointment. "You'd forgotten—even that you called me 'Cinderella'! I knew you would forget, of course. It was nothing to you. You were grown up, and I was only a child you never needed to think of again. But you see you made my life so different I've remembered you every minute—yes, *every* one, in all the years, I think! And I couldn't help *hoping* you might have kept a corner in your thoughts for me—just a wee, dusty corner!"

"*You're* Cinderella!" he muttered. "That little girl—that pretty little girl—on Long Island. Is it possible? I—I did remember. But it's so long ago. So many things happened—my marriage—the war—and—the child was so young. Yet sometimes it has seemed as if your face . . . and then to-day, when Nazlo called you 'Miss Desmond'—still, still it didn't come back to me."

"I thought you said he'd *told* you!" Terry cried.

"He told me you weren't Juliet Divine, that you were ten years younger than she. He said your name was Desmond: that he'd met you at your father's house.

Oh, my child, how glad I am it's *you,* not Nazlo, who gives my Cinderella back to me!"

"I'm glad, too," Terry said, keeping back tears. "But I shouldn't have spoken if I hadn't thought you knew. I'd have felt treacherous to Julia after such a solemn promise as I made. And she had done so much for me! She's my sister,—Father's daughter, not Mother's—and I've worshipped her all my life as my fairy Princess, just as I've worshipped you as my Prince."

Sheridan pressed his lips against the girl's white dress. It smelled sweet, like violets, and the fragrance seemed to express her, as the scent of red roses or magnolias would express Juliet Divine. But his kiss meant that never again would one word against Juliet pass the lips that touched her little sister's gown.

"I can't think, if she knew about us, that Miss Divine would mind the truth coming out," he said. "You needn't tell me the rest of the story—why she didn't come on the cruise herself, or why she let a child like you take such risks . . . till she gives you permission. The biggest and best part I know. And it's the sweetest, dearest thing that ever happened to me. Talk of 'casting bread on the waters'! Mine—carelessly cast, more for my own pleasure than for your good—has come back to me in glorious blessing. Little Cinderella, the prettiest child I ever saw, has grown up to be the loveliest girl in the world, and some day she'll be my wife!"

"But—*Mrs. Sheridan*—if it's true what Mr. Nazlo says about her?" Terry couldn't tell him now how she'd been making up her mind that they must not marry; and she would not tell him that there was a possibility of her marrying another to save him from trouble.

"I'd forgotten—just for one happy second!" said

Miles. "Still, if you love me, if you'll stick to me, dearest, and have faith and patience, it will work out right."

"How can it," Terry asked, "if she doesn't want to be divorced?" (Let him believe just for this dear moment that their marriage depended on his freedom!)

"I—why, I'll think of some way to make her want it again," Sheridan said.

"What way could there be?"

"Oh—she loves money better than most things. If I offer her enough—"

"*Bribe* her to give you up?" Miles felt a little shudder run through the form between his arms. "Mr. Nazlo said you'd do that. But you *couldn't!* It wouldn't be—honourable."

"Even honour will have to go by the board, then, if it comes to my choosing between it and you," he answered. "Child, I can't give you up. I won't, I know now that life wouldn't be life without you. I'd rather die and be done with it all."

She bent and kissed his forehead as he still knelt at her feet, two small, cold hands caressing his head with a soft and loving touch.

"You love me—as much as that? I can't make it seem possible! There's nothing about me to love. But I love you as I love heaven. You're my only heaven, the only one I ever knew. I can't lose you."

"You shan't, then!" the girl cried out sharply and suddenly. "Rather than you should suffer, or—stoop to bribe your wife, or do anything not worthy of yourself, I'll belong to you forever, my Prince, *without being married.* That couldn't hurt you, could it?"

Sheridan sprang to his feet and clasped her in his arms. He kissed her as if they were to part forever

before the next stroke of the clock. Then he loosed the hold which had taken her breath.

"I won't let my Cinderella come to me in that way," he said. "No! I've sinned against her enough. It's got to be marriage or nothing. But it *shall* be marriage—and everything."

XXXVIII

TERRY was glad—if it was in her then to be glad—that Miles asked for no promise.

He did not know about Captain Guilbert's insults or of her own soul-searchings. He did not know of Nazlo's arguments. He did not guess how all the bewildered shame and humiliation she had suffered for Julia and for herself had culminated to-day; so he took it for granted that she was of the same mind as last night, when a storm of love had swept her into his arms. If he had tried to get some promise from her now, it would have been hard to refuse. She would scarcely have known how to refuse. Yet she wanted above all things to be strong. Her Prince had been wretched with Betty Sheen, who had stained the honour of his name. She—the girl who owed him everything that was best in life—must not be the one to stain that name a second time or bring disaster upon him. If he wouldn't take her in a way that could not harm himself she must be brave and not think too much of her own happiness. But she hadn't the heart to hurt him now. There was time by and by, when she had quite made up her mind what to do. Meanwhile she must think how to pain him least. She must learn to feel that it was *his* future that mattered. It was only last night that this dream of happiness had come—and dreams always broke! She would never be so sad, whatever happened, never so sad, as if she had not known these few wonderful hours of love. She could live on the memory, it seemed, for the rest of her days.

Sheridan was torn between the need to go and the wish to stay, until the inspiration came to take the girl with him rather than leave her in Bousaada with Nazlo there. In the morning, when she had begged to go, Miles had refused, but everything was different now. He thought that Terry would snatch at the idea and was surprised when she demurred.

"Truly, it's best not," she pleaded. "We couldn't let Mrs. Harkness stay behind. And if you want to travel all night, as you say, she'd be tired. I'm not afraid of Mr. Nazlo. I was, a little, once in New York. But I don't think he means to be bad. Anyhow, he can do me no harm—here, with Mrs. Harkness."

It was true, Nazlo could do her no harm. She was safe with Harky, and Sheridan could almost have laughed, with his love in his arms, at the thought of Nazlo daring to want her for his wife. The man had as much chance of getting her as of growing wings!

It was hateful to part from the girl, but common sense was on her side. With Betty and Terry Desmond both in Algiers, some disagreeable scene might take place before he could intervene. In the end, Miles gave up his "inspiration" and resolved to begin his journey again within an hour. The chauffeur had agreed to start at a few moments' notice. Dinner would give time for a little rest, and the moon would see the travellers through the night.

Miles tipped the head waiter to serve the meal for Terry and himself on the balcony. They had a red-shaded lamp and a few flowers from an oasis garden sprinkled over a mound of golden oranges. To Terry it was a feast of romance, as she and her Prince looked into each other's eyes and forgot to eat, his hand clasping hers as their arms lay across the tiny white table.

A thousand thoughts rushed through the girl's brain. What should she do? Had she the heart to run away while Miles was gone, so that he might believe her cruel and hard and put her out of his heart? People in books were always giving each other up with the noblest motives and making great trouble for themselves and every one else concerned. She didn't want to be like that. But how was she to know for certain what was right? She was so young! And then, she had no money to go away with alone, even if it were her duty to go.

Hiding these thoughts, she smiled at Miles in the moonlight, with the dearest smile he had ever seen. He believed it a smile of happiness and love, not guessing that it was instead a smile of love and renunciation.

It was not yet nine o'clock when they took their second farewell, and this time Terry did not run down to the door to see him off. They bade each other good-bye on the balcony; and when Miles had gone, the girl went quickly to her own room.

She shut herself in and lay on the bed fully dressed in the dark, for it seemed as if she could not bear to talk with Harky that night. Presently the old woman knocked, and when no answer came, knocked again. Still Terry did not speak. She hoped that Mrs. Harkness might suppose she had gone to sleep. At last the tapping stopped, but the footsteps she could hear moving away were slow and reluctant.

What if Harky had had something important to say . . . a last message from Miles? . . . With a revulsion of feeling Terry switched on the light, slid off the bed and rushed to the door. She was about to unlock it and call the old woman, or even run along the balcony to her window if she had disappeared, but before she

had turned the key, her eyes fell upon an envelope which had been slipped beneath the door.

The girl did not turn the key. She stooped and picked up the letter. There was no name upon it, no writing at all; but of course it must be for her. Most likely, she thought, Miles had scrawled a few words in haste at the last moment and told Mrs. Harkness to bring the note to her room. She opened the envelope eagerly.

As she had seen Sheridan's handwriting, she knew, at first glance, that this was not his. It was not like him, and this letter had no beginning. A bit of folded paper had been pinned to the top.

"I send you the enclosed so that you may be sure I told the truth to-day," she read. "I beg of you to see me to-night, if only for a few minutes. Yours ever, E. N."

Nazlo! He had found out the number of her room and had put the letter under her door, hoping that she would read on to the end before she guessed who was the writer.

Terry unpinned the morsel of paper from the top of the page. Nazlo had apparently cut it out of a letter: but the embossed heading was only too familiar: a tiny flag and "S. Y. Silverwood."

The girl's heart missed a beat. "I haven't the slightest intention of divorcing my husband, no matter how shamefully he has behaved." The words, in a woman's writing, sprang to her eyes.

Betty Sheen—Betty Sheridan—had written them, Terry was sure.

Why hadn't Nazlo shown Mrs. Sheridan's letter to Miles? Or had he shown it and had Miles not told

because he wished her to keep up hope—because he was certain of inducing his wife to change her mind for the second time?

As she gazed and pondered, again a knock sounded at the door. Whoever was outside could see the light now, therefore it was useless to keep quiet and pretend to be asleep.

"My dear, are you in bed?" asked Harky's voice.

Terry sighed with relief. She'd feared that Nazlo had come back! Still, she did not want to see Mrs. Harkness.

"Not—not yet," she hesitated. "But—"

"Do let me come in. I have something very particular to say," the old woman pleaded. "I know you must be tired. But I won't stay long. Seems as if I couldn't wait till morning!"

Terry opened the door, and the stout, respectable figure came in. Some quality in the old voice had told her that Mrs. Harkness was keeping down strong emotion, and as the light fell upon her face, the girl saw tears.

She shrank back a little, hands over her heart. "Oh, what is it?" she faltered. "No more bad news? I can't live through any more to-night!"

"You won't have to, my child, you won't have to," Harky choked. A sob struggled up from her breast. She searched nervously for her handkerchief, and not finding it, flicked tears away with her fingers.

"Why do you speak to me so?" Terry asked sharply. "You make me afraid."

"Indade, I wasn't meanin' to do that," sputtered the woman, her brogue very strong, as it always became when she was in the throes of emotion. "What I've heard from Mr. Miles has just bowled me over, *that's*

what's the matter! To think of the cruel injustice I've been doin' ye in my heart all this time, and you as innocent as a babe unborn! Can ye ever forgive me, darlin' child?"

"He told you—" Terry faltered.

"Why, I did hear Mr. Nazlo call you 'Miss Desmond,' but it made no impression whatever on me mind. Mr. Miles has been explainin' how not only are ye not Miss Juliet Divine, but not *anything* like what I've been takin' ye for—what you never once *seemed* to be at all!"

The girl caught her by the sleeve. "What *did* you take me for?" she cried. "Do tell me! You must. That's the one thing I've been needing to know all along. I need to know now, more than ever before, oh, *far* more! I can't be myself till I do know."

Mrs. Harkness was embarrassed. The tears dried on her hot cheeks. "Why, my dear, you must understand what I mean," she hedged. "You must understand that —that—"

"What? I tell you I don't understand. I know so little. It isn't many months since I was in school—with the nuns. Sometimes it's seemed lately as if I knew nothing at all worth knowing. But you see, I'm not eighteen yet—"

"Not eighteen?" the old woman gasped. "Why, you're a baby! And it's a baby you look—if I'd ever let meself belave me own eyes. But that's what I didn't do, and Mr. Miles didn't do it either. He—"

"You haven't told me yet what you took me for."

Mrs. Harkness looked trapped. "I suppose ye know there are bad women in the world?"

"There must be lots."

"It's a *special* kind of badness I'm meanin'! The

kind of badness where a woman will live with a man she's not married to, and even though he's married to some one else, maybe."

"But"—Terry faltered—"then *I'm* one of those bad ones! I would live with Miles without being married if he couldn't get a divorce. I've just told him. I said I'd rather live so than he should try and bribe his wife—it seemed horrible to do that. I thought, if he had me to love him—because he said he wanted me so much and wouldn't give me up—he could *hide* me from people who would talk and do him harm. He could see me sometimes, and always I could be praying for him and loving him. No one need know, as they would if we were married. Nobody could say he had done wrong to his wife and married a girl—a bad girl—like me—or my sister Julia."

"My good Lord, is Juliet Divine your sister?" the old woman gurgled.

"Yes. My half-sister. I look like her, they say."

"Then she *can't* be as black as she's painted! No one that's like *you,* my dear, or belongin' to ye, can be all bad. I used to lie awake nights in me cabin puzzlin' me brains how such a little angel could—but *there!* Me instinct about ye was right all through! Ye *are* a little angel, and I take back every word I spoke about its bein' the best thing for you and for Mr. Miles if you should go out of his life and marry another man to build up a barrier between the two of ye! You'd be the *makin'* of him, me child. You'd show him that all beautiful young women ain't like his wife, who never loved him or thought of anybody except herself. You'd give back his faith. You'd—"

"But I thought you said women were bad—*specially*

bad—who would live with men they loved, and not be married. I offered, and he wouldn't—"

"I didn't say men they *loved*. And offering's not *doing*. Ye're not that kind, me dear! You offered—*I* know!—because ye're *not* selfish, never a bit because you are. There's all the difference betwixt good and bad in that! Mr. Miles would be a wicked man to take ye at your word, you bein' what ye are. That would be a sin indeed! But now I know that yer heart doesn't give the lie to yer face, and the other way round, I pray to God that Mrs. Sheridan lets him go free. She'll do it only if she wants to be free herself, the way it was planned; still, it may be the gentleman—Mr. Nazlo—has got things a bit wrong. Even that 'prosecution' stuff he hinted about doesn't worry me much now. Mr. Miles is a good fighter when his blood's up."

Terry was pale, but as she listened to the old woman her eyes were wide open and radiant. She looked transfigured.

"Oh, you make me so happy!" she said. "I trust you, Mrs. Harkness, because I think you love—*him*—better than any one else in the world does or could, except me. One of the things that most made me feel I should do him harm by letting him love me (except in that hidden way) was your disapproving of me from the first. You're so good, so faithful; and even though you'd learned to like me a little—for myself—you *couldn't* like me for him. Are you telling me—honour bright!—that I'd do Miles good, not harm, if—if we should ever be married?"

"I do, on me soul—and on Mr. Miles' soul too."

"Even though—Juliet Divine is my sister, and I love her, no matter what she's like or what she has done?"

"Yes," insisted Harky. "What real difference would her bein' your sister make so long as—as ye weren't that kind yerself?"

"Oh, dear Mrs. Harkness, I'm so glad! Even though men like Mr. Nazlo and—one of the French officers here—say things that make me feel—as if they'd thrown mud at my face?"

"Me poor baby!" crooned the old woman. "The more beasts they! They didn't understand ye. But Mr. Nazlo does now. He's asked ye to marry him. He couldn't do more. And when—if—ye're Mrs. Miles Sheridan there'll never be any mud throwin', I can promise ye that!"

"And people wouldn't say Miles had ruined himself, truly they wouldn't?"

"They would not, indade! You bein' what you are, there'd be no reason, anyhow, why they should."

"You're sure?"

"I'm sure. And though I'm only an old servant-woman, I've kept me eyes and ears open these many years. I know the world as well as if I'd been born a fine dame. My dear, don't you fret. I eat all my words about marriage with that Nazlo, every one of 'em! I see happiness ahead of Mr. Miles and you in the future, as I never thought to see it even before the news came to-day, and while the road looked fairly straight ahead. If Mrs. Sheridan—"

Terry held out the cut piece of paper which Nazlo had enclosed. "It's a dreadfully big 'if,'" she said. "As big as the world. Look, I meant to show you this. But I wanted to hear what you thought—about *me*—first. You've made me feel as if all the mud had been washed off. Even if I can't be happy, I feel clean!"

XXXIX

BETTY had wired and written in answer to Nazlo's letter from Monaco to New York, and they had exchanged several cables before she landed in Algiers. In a telegram sent her at Marseilles Nazlo suggested a meeting in Algiers, but Betty was all prudence now,—in small things, where she felt no great temptation to be reckless,—and it seemed wisest not to see any man, with the exception of Salvano, until she had met her husband. She *had* to see Salvano (of whose presence in Algiers she'd learned definitely from Nazlo) because upon the result of a talk with Paul the next step with Miles depended. She was determined, however, to give no other handle for gossip if she could help it. Miles might be in a venomous mood, and she wouldn't like him to hear that the Shoe King had met her when the ship from Marseilles docked. Neither did she want Nazlo to call on board "Silverwood," but when she had taken up her quarters there (to the silent distress of Captain Yale) and learned of Miles' absence from Algiers, she sent a note to Nazlo's hotel.

He was staying at the St. George, and he suggested that, if Mrs. Sheridan thought it would be "conspicuous" to lunch with him, she might come and have tea on the terrace alone. Then he could stroll past, and not the most censorious gossip could make mischief out of a chance meeting. Nazlo added, "Speaking of gossip, Prince Paul di Salvano and the Callahans are at the St. George and quite the centre of attraction. Rose

poses as 'Miss Callahan,' but every one thinks she's married to Salvano and that the old man is keeping the Prince on financial probation for a while. Unless there'd been a marriage, old Callahan would be pretty sure to send Salvano packing after all the talk. I had better tell you that there's talk also about your husband, who has friends here, not counting those who are yours as well. Some think you're certain to divorce him; others think the opposite. But none of them know who the girl in the case really is, or that, if you play your cards well now, you hold him in the hollow of your hand."

This letter had been sent by messenger to Betty on board "Silverwood" almost at the moment of her arrival, and hardly two hours after Miles' departure with the girl and Mrs. Harkness for Bousaada. It was then that Betty wrote the reply from which Nazlo had cut out a few lines for Terry Desmond's eyes.

Captain Yale's evident reluctance to receive the owner's wife on board was further proof to Betty that Nazlo had told the truth about Miles. Not only was he infatuated with the Desmond girl, but Yale was aware of the fact. If Betty had not been in a black mood she must have felt some malicious amusement when Yale urged the superior comforts of an Algiers hotel. The yacht was being cleaned, he pointed out, while Mr. Sheridan was away, and the understanding was that no one should be allowed on board. Of course, in the case of Mrs. Sheridan, it was different; if she chose to put up with the inconveniences of "housecleaning," he had nothing to say. Still, he must wire the news that Madam had come on board.

"Tell me where my husband is and I'll wire," Betty snapped.

But Captain Yale excused himself. Even to Mrs. Sheridan he couldn't give that information unless his employer permitted.

"I shall soon know where he's gone without your telling me," she boasted, confident that she would learn from Nazlo, whose letter mentioned that he was making enquiries.

"Very well, Madam, in that case you can communicate with Mr. Sheridan," returned Yale, whose cool manner covered a certain agitation.

Betty shrugged her shoulders. "I shan't bother if you're going to telegraph," she said. "My husband will come back when he learns I'm here. And I shall be quite comfortable in that pretty cabin of *my own*—which I remember well. As for my maid, I shall choose a room for her."

There was something like a threat veiled by these words, but Captain Yale could hardly put his employer's wife off the yacht, at all events without definite orders to do so. And if she stayed on board she was owner, in place of her husband.

As Yale was quick-witted enough to guess (knowing something of women), Mrs. Sheridan imagined that her cabin, the most luxurious on board, had been given to the guest. He realised also that it was almost a disappointment to the lady that no such insult had been put upon her. Angry as he was at the *coup* she had sprung on him, the Captain chuckled as he wondered about Madam's expression of face when she saw the darkened and dust-sheeted cabin, kept sacred to the memory of her honeymoon.

Betty could no more travel without an efficient maid who was used to her ways than a Pekinese puppy could walk back to China on foot. She had brought her con-

fidential woman from New York, a Parisienne with every professional talent and no capacity for affection. Estelle knew the secrets which it was convenient to Mrs. Sheridan for her to know, and several others not convenient. She had a sarcastic sense of humour, and this was tickled as she visited the cabins with Madame.

There was Monsieur's stateroom containing many *articles de toilette,* as apparently the occupant intended to be absent only a few days; there were others which had not been tenanted, and there was one where numerous pretty belongings had been left. It was this last which Betty commandeered for her maid.

"Put everything here into Mrs. Harkness' cabin," she directed, her face flushed, her eyes sparkling. Estelle thought, with amazement, that she had never seen her mistress look so plain, so almost vulgar.

"But, if Madame will pardon me," she ventured, hiding the twinkle in her eyes, "I am not particular about my room. The wardrobe here is so full, and there is this trunk under the bed. The small cabin next to that of Madame Harkness will be good enough for me, and—"

"Do as I tell you! This stateroom is near mine, and I prefer you to have it."

"As Madame desires," Estelle meekly agreed, delighted with the fit of temper into which she had thrown her mistress. "I merely wished to show Madame that so much trouble was not needed for *my* sake."

It was noon when Betty, her maid and her luggage arrived on board "Silverwood." She was not consciously hungry, but she had a throbbing headache and felt rather inclined to faint, therefore luncheon was hastily ordered. She ate little when it was served, crumbling a roll, tasting some delicately flavoured *riz*

de veau, and drinking three glasses of champagne. The cold, sparkling wine soothed her nerves, as she had hoped (there was only *one* thing better, but she'd had none of that—or almost none—for months), and, sleepy after a restless night, she wrote a short note before going to lie down for an hour.

Estelle had been told to call her mistress at three, and was prompt.

"Madame looks much better!" the Frenchwoman remarked, when she had drawn back the curtains.

"Did I look badly before?" The question had a note of sharpness, for Betty wished to be at her best to-day.

"But no, Madame, only a little pale and tired. The rest has done Madame good."

At four o'clock Betty was dressed in a bewitching frock of knitted silk, of the same pale primrose yellow as the tint at which she had kept her hair. She wore a Parisian evolution of a toque that matched in colour, with a deft touch of turquoise, like her eyes. Suède shoes and filmy silk stockings were primrose tinted, too; and when, half an hour later, a taxi deposited her at the door of the St. George, the dainty figure in yellow seemed to be illumined by the afternoon sun.

There had been no open scandal about Betty Sheridan's flirtation with Paul di Salvano or any of the men she had favoured; and she was sure that Miles' conduct must have made of her a sympathetic figure. She was horribly unhappy about Paolo, yet she had a thrill of something like pleasure as she sauntered out upon the terrace. She thought of herself as very beautiful, more beautiful than any of the women who sat at little tables, looking up at her as she slowly passed. If Rose Callahan were there with Paolo, he could not help being struck by the contrast between them; the exquisite, per-

fectly dressed woman he had loved and the common creature he sought for money.

Betty shrank not at all from the eyes that stared. There was no reason why *she* should object to being seen! She bowed to four or five people from New York whom she knew, smiling a sad, sweet smile, and hoping half-consciously that her blue eyes looked tragic. Her friends pushed their chairs back and got up to greet her. Several pressed her to join them for tea, but Betty gently refused. She was rather hoping that her husband might come, she said. She'd arrived only that morning to surprise him, but he was away for part of the day, not having expected her so soon. He might return at any moment and come to meet her, as she'd left word on the yacht where she meant to spend the afternoon.

"Poor girl, can it be she really doesn't *know?*" the women whispered to each other. "How awful for her when she finds out!"

And one or two murmured what an odd coincidence it was, Prince Paul di Salvano being in Algiers at such a time, because he'd been talked about a good deal with poor little Betty before the Callahan affair developed. Every one felt faintly excited, wondering what would happen. They *thought* that they hoped nothing would happen; but in their secret hearts they yearned for a thrill, as if they waited for the curtain to rise at the Grand Guignol.

Betty indicated to an admiring waiter a small table laid for two, and sat down to gaze sorrowfully, with raised eyebrows, out over the violet expanse of bay. She looked as if she were thinking, "Why is the world so fair and happy when I am so sad?" But under that attractive expression she was wondering whether Sal-

vano and the Callahans—or Paul and Rose alone—would presently appear.

On entering the hotel she had stopped for an instant to question the concierge. She had written a note which she wished to leave for Prince Paul di Salvano. Was he still stopping at the St. George? Yes? And Monsieur Callahan and Mademoiselle, his daughter? Ah, that was good! She would give the letter to the concierge, but perhaps the Prince and his friends might be having tea on the terrace? In that case she would meet them.

Betty knew that if she did, there would be little, if any, chance for a private word with Paolo. Still she was nervously keen to see him. Her letter left with the hall-porter had been a threatening one. Salvano could sue her for blackmail on the strength of it if he cared to do so. But that would be the last course of action he would take. Even if he were already married to Rose, she could ruin him with old Callahan, she thought. And if he were not yet married, he would have to come back to her. If he looked agitated at sight of her, all the better! The Callahans would notice, and she wanted them to notice. She wondered if Paolo would take the letter from the concierge and glance it over before coming out on the terrace—if he dared to come out after that! He'd recognise the writing on the envelope, and hearing from the porter that it had been left by a lady, he would be frightened—traitor that he was! Betty imagined that, in self-defence, he would open it at once. Then he would want to turn back and avoid seeing the woman whose love he had betrayed—or tried to betray—even if he loved her still in his heart. He wouldn't, however, dare take the risk of letting her meet Rose Callahan and the girl's father in his absence.

Altogether, Betty convinced herself that Fate would soon deliver Paolo into her hands. And she hoped that Eustace Nazlo would keep out of the way till the meeting was over, for good or ill. After that the Shoe King might join her, and welcome!

"China tea, please, with orange flower-water instead of milk; and nothing to eat," she instructed the hovering waiter.

He hurried conscientiously away, and as her eyes idly followed the short black figure, she saw Rose Callahan come out on the terrace. Behind her strolled the old man; and behind him was Paul di Salvano.

XL

BETTY saw the three from a long way off, but she looked only at Paolo. His dark face was haggard. His eyes glanced about anxiously. *He had read the letter!*

Callahan, a big-headed, short-necked man, with grizzled, curly hair, made straight for a table whose three tilted chairs indicated that it was reserved. He had a sullen, bulldog air, Betty thought, as if life had gone awry with him, and he was trying, without quite knowing how, to make the best of it. He had been very different when he first arrived from the West with Rose to conquer New York. His blunt-featured face had been fresh-coloured. He had worn an almost perpetual grin of self-satisfaction and pleasure in his possessions—including Rose. He had walked with a swagger, almost a strut, his chin up, glancing about to see if he and his daughter were observed. Now he marched doggedly, his head down. Even a casual observer might have guessed that the man was morose from some secret disappointment; and Betty more than guessed. She was sure; and she knew what the disappointment was. All that had glittered about Paul di Salvano wasn't gold! Once Callahan had wanted the Prince for a son-in-law. Now he didn't want him. But *was* Paul his son-in-law? That was the only part about which Betty felt uncertain.

Rose's looks told nothing. The girl was pretty, with the beauty of youth, but her features were blunt like her father's, and already she began to be too full-blown.

As the old man strode ahead, the girl had time to throw Salvano a smile, with raised eyebrows. Whether it were a married smile or an engaged smile Betty could not tell.

The three sat down, Rose between the two men, and directly facing Betty. Miss Callahan had never been introduced to Mrs. Miles Sheridan, but they had often seen each other in New York; and father and daughter would at one time have given a good deal to squeeze into Betty Sheridan's set. Later, Rose had doubtless heard of the flirtation between Salvano and the young married woman, or Betty's firm intention to snub had made an impression. At all events, the girl's wistful, admiring glances at theatre or restaurant had changed to a stony stare, and it was now with a graven-image gaze that she regarded the lady from New York.

Betty saw this without looking up: just the ordinary trick that women are born with, and men can never learn. She saw also that Rose turned to Paolo and spoke. He kept his profile in Mrs. Sheridan's direction, but Mr. Callahan's head moved, and Betty felt his eyes upon her.

This little drama, just begun, meant joy or misery for her future; but it hadn't developed to tragedy yet, and Betty found herself slightly amused, as if she were a spectator of the play instead of a leading character. Could it be that Salvano would try to brazen it out, or was he working up the scene to make things easy for himself? She would know soon, because in the note she had warned him that Eustace Nazlo was in the offing and that they had better have a talk before the latter came to her table.

The tea she had ordered was brought, and as she glanced up, after pouring herself a cup, she met

Paolo's eyes. He was deliberately looking at her, as if seeing her for the first moment. She bowed, and he bowed, slightly rising from his chair. Then, with a word of excuse or explanation to Rose and Callahan, he walked to her table.

"How do you do, Mrs. Sheridan?" he asked, in a tone audible to every one near. "This is a surprise. I thought you were in New York."

Betty held out her hand, and Salvano took it in his, pressing it sharply, so that the rings hurt her fingers. In spite of the pain, however, an electric thrill shot through her arm to her heart, for there was hope in that pressure, hope in the one flashing look telegraphed from the Italian's eyes to hers.

"He cares!" she told herself.

"May I sit down and talk for just a moment?" Salvano asked, still in the same "everybody can hear" tone. "I've promised Miss Callahan and her father to see a moving picture with them after tea, but—"

"*Is* she 'Miss Callahan'?" Betty broke in. *Her* tone was not intended for every one. It was for Paolo alone.

"You mean—"

"You know what I mean."

"I know there's been talk."

"Of course there's been talk! Paolo, you've got to tell me. Are you married to the girl?"

"No. I—"

"Are you engaged to her?"

"Betty—you shoot accusations at me! I've allowed them to think—"

"And everybody else to think! Paolo, what did you take me for—a marble statue? It's to *me* you're engaged."

"My dear," he soothed her, "you're a married woman. I heard that your husband wouldn't go in for a divorce after all. What hope was there? I was desperate, and —and these things happen—"

"Listen, Paolo," she cut him short, "don't try any melodrama with me. You know all about Miles and his girl. You can't help it! One's only got to look at old Callahan to see that he doesn't trust you or like you. I wonder those two sit still and let you come over to me! But I suppose Rose believes she's strong enough, and Callahan's afraid he's *too* sure of you these days! The old thing will like and trust you a lot less if he sees the letters you wrote me, and he will see them unless you break off with Rose to-night—yes, *to-night.* I'm not being a beast to you! I realise that you need money, but I'm not poor. I'll have more even than we thought when we thrashed things out one day you won't have forgotten. I'm doing you a good turn, taking you away from that common girl and that vulgar old man who despises you. You won't have to be ashamed of *me* as your wife—and you would, of Rose. Besides, you love me! You can't have changed so soon. I've come half across the world to claim you because by the law of love and decency you're mine."

For an instant there was silence after that fierce though whispered outburst. Then Salvano said—always in the same gentle tone—"Of course I love you, Betty. I've always wanted you. Some one must have lied to part us. I see that now. I swear to you I thought everything was changed. And you know as well as I do I was what they call 'on my beam ends.' Your letter says you're staying on your husband's yacht. Where is he?"

"Away—motoring—with that girl. He won't be back till to-morrow at earliest, probably not then."

"If he comes, and you stay on the yacht, that will be condoning—"

"I'll condone nothing unless I have to send these letters of yours to Callahan."

"I'd like to call on you to-night and explain several things if you'll let me—"

"Of course I'll let you. I expect you!"

"And if you're sure Sheridan won't come. I don't want—for your sake—to go through a second scene like that in New York."

"I'm sure he won't come. What time will you call?"

"I've got to go to the Opera with some people—oh, there are others besides the Callahans! It's my party. I invited them, so I can't get out of it. But isn't it better for me to be late, coming to you? Every one on board the yacht is sure to be a sort of spy for your husband. You know what the law is. If he heard I'd been with you, he might bring in a counter-petition. I'm not sure what they call it, but you see what I mean. At twelve o'clock, if you're sitting on deck in the moonlight, can't I get to you without being spied on? Can't you receive me—and send me away—without any one being the wiser? If you'll do that, I'll make everything right between us again—as if this mistake had never been."

"Perhaps I can manage it," Betty said, slowly. "Let me think what to do. . . . Oh, I might buy a ticket and send Estelle on shore to that masked ball for the benefit of the war orphans of Algiers, that they're advertising all over the place. I noticed the posters as I taxied to this hotel. She'd adore to go! I could tell her she needn't be back till two o'clock—that I'd do

without her help. And I'd give it out on the yacht that she was to return at twelve. Then, if you wore a black domino and the Captain or any one saw you from a distance as you came on board—"

"That would be easy," Salvano agreed. "But going off—"

"You just *mustn't* be seen, that's all! And going off won't be difficult. We're in harbour. The Captain doesn't have to be on the bridge. By that time of night he'll be in his bunk asleep. I'll go with you to the gangway. I'll wear white. Beside me you'll be only a black shadow."

"You were always ingenious," Salvano praised her. "My beautiful one, I am a new man! You take a load from my heart."

He rose, very tall and handsome, handsomer than he had ever been, Betty thought. "I must go back to the Callahans at once, I'm afraid," he said. "It's best to keep the peace for to-day, or something may go wrong again. Besides, here comes Eustace Nazlo—making straight for your table."

Betty let Paolo go without a word of objection, giving him her hand again and a conventional smile for the benefit of the Callahans. He had been with her no more than five minutes, but they had contrived to say a good deal, perhaps all that needed to be said before the full explanation. She did not trust him, but he was in her power, and she meant to use it.

"Am I too early?" Nazlo asked, as he accepted Mrs. Sheridan's invitation to sit down.

"No," she assured him pleasantly, though with a wandering mind. "I ordered tea—but you shall have some fresh. What have you found out about my husband—and the girl?"

"They've gone to Bousaada," the Shoe King answered. "It's a motor trip of seven hours at least. They won't have arrived there yet. The chauffeur and car were engaged to be absent from three to four days. I found out at the garage where the auto was hired."

"Good!" said Betty. "I'm much obliged to you for taking all this trouble."

"It was not trouble," the Greek protested. "But—you seem to have changed, Mrs. Sheridan. You're not interested!"

"Oh, yes, I am, awfully interested," she insisted.

"Surely you've not altered your mind—in regard to your husband?" There was anxiety in Nazlo's tone, and Betty faintly smiled. She knew that what he had done wasn't for love of her blue eyes. He had some design which concerned the girl. Either he wanted revenge or wanted the girl herself. That was the reason why he wished to prevent Miles from being divorced and free.

"I haven't changed in any way," she said. "Isn't this quite a little drama we're playing in, Mr. Nazlo? There seem to be so many funny complications! I suppose the next one will be Miles turning up on the yacht—with his pretty lady—and finding me in possession."

"That may happen to-morrow," Nazlo agreed. And as Betty kept her opinion of his motives to herself, so he kept to himself his next intentions. He had thought of telling her that he meant to start early in the morning by motor for Bousaada; yet something in her manner caused him to decide otherwise. He could not define that "something," but he connected it with Prince Paul di Salvano. The young woman had the air of being up to some impish trick. She might even hope to per-

suade Salvano to throw over the Callahan girl and run away with her instead. It would be just as well to let her believe that she had plenty of rope, and then to draw it in by hurrying Sheridan back from Bousaada to Algiers.

Nazlo was still sitting with Betty on the terrace of the St. George, when far away at the desert town Miles Sheridan's car first drew up before the little hotel whose white façade was painted rose-red by the sunset.

XLI

SALVANO had lied to Betty. He and Rose Callahan were married. But even if Mrs. Sheridan had not come to Algiers with her letters and her threats, his position would still have been insecure.

Callahan, delighted at first with his title, had taken the precaution of making enquiries before allowing things to go too far. He had expected debts, but not disgraceful debts, and the affair with Mrs. Sheridan was not the only one that had started scandal. The old man would have liked to secure the right kind of a prince for a son-in-law, but it looked as if Salvano were not the right kind. Not only that, but there were plenty of better princes where Salvano came from, and in various other countries. Callahan resolved to take Rose where these princes were, and where Prince Paul di Salvano was not. But he made one error of judgment. He let Rose and Salvano see too clearly and too soon what was in his mind.

Rose knew her father well. She had been in love before—though not like this!—and Pop hadn't "cottoned" to the men. He had been right in those cases, because they weren't good enough for her, but this one was. She adored Paolo and meant to have him. It was she, therefore, who warned Salvano of danger, and suggested a secret marriage, because "Pop would have to come round in the end."

The Prince, being Italian, would not have dared propose it, for the simple reason that such a marriage would not in fact be legal, and he might be accused of

deceiving the girl. He explained in a half-hearted way, that there were difficulties. Without the parents' consent a marriage would not hold in his own country; and there were besides all sorts of formalities which must be observed. Still, they could be married according to American law, if his sweet Rose trusted him enough for a secret wedding. Then, if her father consented later, the whole thing could be gone over again in the proper way before outsiders knew the story.

Rose was sure her father would consent. Why, he'd *have* to! So a license was bought by the girl herself, and the two were married one afternoon by a Methodist minister, at Jamaica, Long Island. Rose wrote to one or two friends, cautioning them not to tell, but she was in a mood not to care, really, whether they told or not. This mood changed somewhat, however, when the confession to Pop had been made (by her, not Paolo) and she had seen how he took it.

As she explained to Salvano afterwards, Pop behaved more like a mad bull than any one's kind old Pa. He roared home truths about the Prince's morals, and said he'd break the marriage—which wasn't a marriage anyhow, by Gad!

Rose cried so much, however, that eventually Callahan relented. He talked with the bridegroom, and put him on probation. Salvano wasn't to consider Rose his wife, and must prevent the truth about the secret marriage from leaking out. The pair would be permitted to call themselves engaged, and Salvano might follow the father and daughter abroad, where Callahan had already planned to travel. If the Prince behaved himself for six months, and if meanwhile Callahan heard no worse tales than he had heard already, there

might be a real wedding—in Rome, perhaps, after a meeting with Paolo's parents.

With this concession Salvano had to be content, on the principle of half a loaf being better than no bread, and on the understanding that—for the honour of the family—his most pressing debts should be paid immediately. Also, Callahan was willing to advance money for Salvano's travelling and other expenses.

The arrangement was humiliating: but Callahan was a millionaire several times over. If Paolo could "keep on Pop's good side," as Rose pointed out, all disagreeable things would soon be forgotten. Pop was *like* that! He couldn't bear malice. Consequently, Salvano was at present extremely busy in keeping on that good side. He hoped sometimes that he was succeeding, though Callahan remained gloomy and morose, suspicious every time that his son-in-law looked at any woman except Rose or accepted an invitation to play bridge.

Betty Sheridan's letter had been almost a death sentence. Salvano had glanced it through, crumpled it and the envelope into his pocket, and thinking quickly, had walked in the wake of the Callahans, onto the Terrace. He shuffled his thoughts like a pack of cards, and as a result allowed Rose to sit facing Mrs. Sheridan whom he saw as he passed through the doorway. It would be useless, he knew, to try and prevent the girl or her father from noticing the newcomer. Such an attempt would fail and excite the suspicions of both, though Salvano had long ago "had it out" with Rose about Betty. He'd explained that the affair had been the merest flirtation, that Mrs. Sheridan hadn't been precisely backward, and that their position in society had led to exaggeration. Rose had believed him, but he mustn't let her suppose for an instant that Betty's

appearance in Algiers was in any way connected with him.

"There's that stuck-up cat of a Sheridan creature," was Rose's comment as her eyes singled out the charmingly dressed woman whose bright hair glittered like gold in the afternoon sun.

"Really!" Salvano exclaimed. "You mean Mrs. Miles Sheridan? What a small world, isn't it? I mustn't look now, or she'll know we're talking about her, but I will in a minute—as if by accident. I suppose she has come to take care of her husband. Apparently he needs it—if what I hear is true."

Presently he did look, bowing to Betty, and half rising from his chair. "How she has gone off!" he murmured to Rose. "Out of doors in the sunlight, where you look so lovely, she's quite haggard. Trying to keep down flesh works the deuce with a woman, they say! Shall I go over and speak to her, or—"

"Yes, go," decided Rose, delighted with Paul's criticism. "If you don't, she'll think I'm keeping you away because I'm jealous, and I'm not a bit—never was."

"There was never any cause," said the Prince, while the letters that Betty held over his head as a threat loomed perilous as Damocles' sword. "I'll come back as soon as I can escape from her without being rude."

He was sincerely anxious to get back, for Rose—whom he might lose—had never seemed so attractive, and he actively hated the woman who had the power to ruin him. If a wish could have killed, Paul di Salvano would have shot an invisible arrow straight into Betty Sheridan's heart.

As he threaded his way between tables, until he reached hers, the Italian hastily planned his campaign.

By the time he had pressed her hand, gazed into her eyes, and sat down beside her, he had seen a way to save himself. It was a terrible way, but he could think of no other, and he would take it. The thought of what must be done made him feel slightly sick. But he had not been through the war for nothing.

. . . . . .

At midnight, Betty was sitting on deck, wearing white, as she had told Paolo that she would do. She had chosen a white evening gown of "shadow lace," sewn all over with little sparkling crystals. There was an under-dress of silver tissue, and her slippers were silver, with big buckles of old paste. A band of brilliants streaked her forehead and pale hair with light, and the cloak flung over the chair-back was of silver brocade lined with ermine. As the moon flooded her figure she glittered from head to foot, and it seemed to her that she must be very beautiful.

She compared herself with Rose Callahan, shrugging her shoulders, and watching her dress sparkle as she moved towards the rail to watch for Paolo's boat.

It was coming! Betty saw the Arab rower, and the black form in the domino. All the romance in the world seemed to be moving silently towards her across the still waters. She drew in a deep breath, holding the sheeny silver of her cloak across her breast, and felt like a woman of medieval days, engaged in a wonderful love intrigue.

Betty was romantic only on the surface. Such depths as she had were devoted to love of self, and money to make that self happy and beautiful; but all the romance her shallows held had been awakened for the first time by Salvano's eyes. She cared more for him than she had ever cared for any man. But even

after seeing him to-day, she had weakened in her resolve to marry him if he were free—weakened for such an irritating, inadequate little reason that she could almost laugh at it! Nazlo had told her a good deal about Teresa Desmond; and when Betty had heard that the girl came from the Blue Moon Inn on Long Island, she had realised with a shock that Miles' love was the child of the Silverwood caretakers, whom she had caused to be discharged. In furious disgust that *her* husband should be caught by a brat of the servant class—a little wretch she had slapped and sent out of the house in disgrace—she felt a fierce impulse to hold Miles. A thought had run through her brain that she might remain Mrs. Sheridan, live abroad a good deal, and keep her "friendship" with Paolo, married to Rose. This temptation she flung from her, however, with a spasm of virtue. If she could snatch Paolo from Rose, he must be hers by the law, and in that case she couldn't prevent the Desmond brat from taking her place as Mrs. Miles Sheridan. But she could prevent the new Mrs. Sheridan from finding a place in society. She would tell every one that the girl had been a servant; that her sister was notorious, and that the father kept a disreputable Road House on Long Island. There wouldn't be much of a welcome for the bride in the Inner Circle after that story had gone round!

Betty turned her mind from Teresa Desmond, as she might have turned off a flickering jet of gas, and focused upon Paolo. He was close now, almost under the side of the yacht, and the oarsman—bribed of course to caution—made scarcely a sound as he propelled his small boat through the water. Betty bent over the rail, with the light sending out a long ray

from the diamond hair band and ten thousand flashes from the crystals of her cloak. Above, the moon was a greenish silver lamp hung in a sky of luminous mauve. What a night for lovers!

. . . . . .

Five minutes later the black figure in a domino was drawing the white vision into the shadow of the awning. Not far away from the sleeping yacht the little boat waited. Nobody had seen or heard the domino come on board.

"Well?" Betty murmured, looking up into a pair of dark eyes, her small fingers half crushed in strong hands that were fever-hot.

"It *is* well!" Paolo answered. "I have got out of all that tangle of trouble—got out of it for *you*. Betty, I've lived in a nightmare! A woman I trusted told me you didn't care for me any more—you'd been only flirting—you had confided in her that you really meant to keep your husband. I musn't tell you who she was. I swore I wouldn't. Like me, you'd never forgive her. I hardly knew what I was doing after that. I felt deadly ill. I thought of killing you and myself as well. But just when I was most desperate, I was thrown with Rose. She liked me. I drifted into an engagement. I was too unhappy about you to care much—even when I heard the reports that Rose and I were married. I *hoped* they'd reach your ears. Yes! I wanted to hurt you."

"They did reach my ears. They did hurt me," whispered Betty. "I tell you frankly, Paolo, I *would* have held Miles in spite of everything if you'd betrayed me—if you were married. But I *had* to see you first before I decided. I'm so thankful now!"

"And I!" said Salvano. Pressing her against his

breast, he wished ardently that he could press the life out of her lungs. It would save trouble!

"You oughtn't to have believed things about me without proof," he reproached her.

"I didn't believe—entirely."

"Yet you would have sent my letters—my poor letters in which I poured out my heart to you—sent them to a vulgar old beast like Callahan."

"I had to have *something* to hold over you."

"Would you really have carried out your threat?"

"Yes, I think I would. I'm sure I would. But we needn't worry about that now. We'll have over an hour together before Estelle gets back from her ball. Let's be happy. I need it!"

"God knows I do," echoed Salvano. "I came to you for that. I've had an awful night! Betty, I've told Rose that our engagement must be off. I haven't tackled her father yet. That's for to-morrow! But I'm a nervous wreck—or I would be, except for you. I hope I'm not a coward physically. I did some fairly decent things in the war. But I'm not brave mentally, carissima Bettina. Help me! Give me back myself. Give me courage for to-morrow and all the days to come before you and I can belong to each other."

"What do you wish me to do?" Betty wanted to know.

"Can't you guess, darling? Let us have one of the old dream nights—nights of heaven."

"Cocaine?"

"Yes, for us both. Think of it, Betty—*think* of it! You remember?"

"Oh, I do—I do! I've remembered too well sometimes. But I've dropped the stuff for months, you know. I haven't any here."

"I have. Bettina, my beautiful one, I brought it, in the hope. And the hypodermic. *Will* you? For love of me?"

She hesitated a few seconds, then said, "Yes, I will! I've my own boudoir on board. It's next to my cabin. There's a great divan there, with heaps of cushions. We can dream. Estelle won't knock at my door when she comes on board. I told her not. But your boat—"

"The man will wait. It doesn't matter to him how long. Time is nothing to Arabs. Bettina—happiness for the first time in all these black weeks, just when I thought it was ended for me—forever!"

"Let's go into the boudoir," she whispered. "It isn't really safe out here. Some one might pass."

The curtains of the pretty room were drawn. Betty locked the outer door, and the door of her cabin that opened to the corridor, lest after all Estelle might have been bored into returning early, and forget instructions. Salvano kissed the willing lips many times, his own lips curiously cold. Then he took the white left arm between his hands and kissed that. A kiss on the arm had always been the preface! The door of heaven was now about to open for them both. Betty flung her gold mesh bag on the table.

"There, I'm ready!" she sighed. "Send me to Paradise, and come with me yourself."

Paolo did not answer. He kissed her arm once more, then pinched it slightly, to numb sensation.

"Now!" he said. Gathering her up as if she were a child, he laid her on the divan. Betty watched, through drooping lashes, as he took from his breast pocket a little gold box. His dark, strong hands were trembling slightly, but she did not notice that. She was looking at the box, with a smile of recognition.

She had seen it often before! And she smiled up at Paolo.

He drew from the box a hypodermic syringe, and lit a candle on the desk close by, a small candle meant for use in sealing letters. When it was alight, he passed the needle through the flame. Betty held up her white arm, still smiling. But Paolo's face was grave. Under a fall of crystal-beaded lace, his eager eyes found a few tiny lumps so small they could just be seen by the naked eye. Only just, but they *could* be seen! Then he jabbed the needle under the delicate skin.

Betty gave a faint cry. "O-oh!" she scolded. "You *hurt* me! You never hurt me so much before!"

"It's over, carissima," he soothed. "Quite over."

"Ah!" Betty sighed. And after a moment of silence: "How wonderful it is! Already! . . . How quickly it steals through one! I'd almost forgotten. Now it's your turn, Paolo. Roll up your sleeve."

"Not till you've closed your sweet eyes," he said. "It's not a pretty sight for them, you know. I don't like you to see."

He bent over her, and kissed her eyelids shut, kissed them again and again. When at last he lifted his head, the lashes lay still and dark on her cheeks. The colour was draining away from her face. Her lips parted. She smiled happily, stirred without opening her eyes, and nestled down into perfect peace. Perfect peace!

Paolo did not do as Betty had bidden him, and roll up his sleeve. He stood staring at her for a few minutes, his face like a mask of stone, only his eyes alive. When she ceased to move, he replaced the hypodermic in its case, picked up the gold mesh bag on the table, and thrust in the apparatus, which, with a tiny bottle,

he wrapped in a small lace-edged handkerchief. Then, very gently—though his eyes were not gentle—he placed the bag under Betty's hand, closing her fingers over the chain.

Still he waited to see if she stirred again. But she lay motionless as one dead, except for the breaths that came and went.

Paolo switched off all the shaded lamps in the boudoir, leaving only a dim pink night-light in the stateroom adjoining, the door of which was ajar. For another moment he stood in the dusk and thought. Then he unlocked the door which led to the deck, opened it resolutely, removed the key, locked the door on the outside and threw back the key through the open window. It landed on the divan, close to Betty's side, for Paolo was quite a good shot. He was satisfied with his aim—satisfied indeed with everything, since these things had to be. And when he had contrived to pull the window along its grooves until it was within an inch or two of being closed, he went away softly as he had come. Sitting on the bottom step of the ladder that was washed gently with tiny waves, he signalled to his boatman with a lighted cigarette.

XLII

SHERIDAN had not been long gone from Bousaada when a telegram arrived for him. It was put out of sight until he should return; but when (after his meeting with Nazlo) he rushed back unexpectedly for an hour, in slipshod, oasis fashion the telegram was forgotten.

Later, when the landlord chanced to remember the folded slip of blue paper, he could do nothing save shrug his shoulders. *Le Monsieur* should have asked if there was anything for him. He must not expect busy people to keep his affairs at the top of their brains! Besides, the message was probably unimportant. These rich Americans and English telegraphed to each other about nothing at all, to save the trouble of a letter! And in any case, *le Monsieur* had said at the very last that he expected to come back next day.

The azure oblong would have remained where it was, for the night, if *Madame la Patronne,* being consulted, had not advised that it be sent to the room of Mademoiselle. A knock at the door brought forth the duenna. There was a moment's discussion within. Then the sleepy waiter with the telegram on a tray was bidden to take it away again. Monsieur Sheridan alone had authority to read the message addressed to him.

. . . . . .

When Miles reached Algiers at the early dawn, a day and a half had passed since his wife's arrival. She had appeared on board "Silverwood" about noon one

day; had lunched, rested, gone out for the afternoon; had come back for dinner, had sent her maid on shore to a charity ball, and had remained up, promenading the deck or sitting in the moonlight till after midnight. She had been seen once or twice, moving about, in her glittering white dress, and had then vanished into her own quarters. It was natural that, after a tiring day and a late night, she should sleep through most of the next morning, and Estelle—who had danced till the small hours—knew better than to disturb her mistress unless she rang.

Even when noon passed, and there had been no sign from Mrs. Sheridan's stateroom, Estelle did not go to the door. Madame sometimes consoled herself for abjuring the *piqures* of morphia or cocaine (Estelle was in that secret) by taking veronal. Only eight grains, because of her heart, which had been weakened by the anti-fat treatment: and with a light dose like that, Madame often dropped into her best sleep towards morning.

At luncheon time, however, Estelle became vaguely uneasy. Madame dieted herself severely, and with courage, but she was fond of her first *déjeuner,* small as it was: coffee and hot, thinly buttered toast. Now two meals must be combined in one.

Softly the Frenchwoman tiptoed to the window of Madame's bedroom; but it was nearly closed, and the silk curtain within hid the room. Estelle listened, and could hear no sound, though Madame breathed rather heavily when she slept, especially these last few months since she had been worried and unwell.

"I will give her half an hour more and then knock," the maid decided.

. . . . . .

So it was half-way between one and two o'clock when the telegram went to Bousaada, bidding Sheridan to start at once.

Just about the time it was sent, by an odd coincidence, Miles' car was spinning away from the hotel door, when Terry stood and waved her hand. If he had gone straight on, he might have reached Algiers at nine o'clock that night. He would then have gone on board "Silverwood" soon after. But he met Nazlo, who had set forth early in the day, long before Estelle thought of wakening her mistress, and consequently long before there was news from the yacht. Sheridan had turned back towards Bousaada, as it happened, instead of going on. He did not leave the little oasis town for the second time, until the hour when, otherwise, he would have been already in Algiers.

The rush through the desert in the night of stars was glorious, and the joy of it went to Sheridan's head like champagne. He was exhilarated, rather than tired by the journey, though his chauffeur looked haggard at the end, till he grinned over his "tip." Again and again Miles had lived through his parting scene with Terry, as a man might order the same reels of a favourite film play to be repeated many times. He had been almost drunk with his own happiness and his memories of the girl—her beauty, her sweetness, her dear innocence—the miracle that she should be his little Cinderella of the past—and that she had forgiven his many sins against her. Betty's figure had been pushed to the far background of his mind. Despite all that Nazlo had said, and though it was certain that she had come to Algiers with some sensational if not sinister purpose, Sheridan did not believe that

UPB

she, or any one else could raise an impassable barrier between him and his happiness.

It was only when he stepped on board the yacht, and saw Captain Yale hastening to meet him along the deck, his tanned face preternaturally solemn, that Betty's importance in his life loomed high and dark once more.

"Well, Yale," Miles hailed the captain, "here I am, at an unearthly hour! But I couldn't get away from Bousaada till nine o'clock last night."

Yale frowned in a puzzled way, as if he didn't quite understand his employer's tone.

"I—I suppose you received my last wire, sir," he ventured, with an air of doubt.

"I had two wires," said Miles. "The first told me —er—that Mrs. Sheridan had arrived on board. The second was an answer to mine in which I asked, to make certain, whether it was really you who'd sent the other telegram."

"But, the third, sir!" Yale faltered. "Surely you must have got that, if you didn't start till last evening? It was sent off about two o'clock yesterday afternoon."

"I didn't get it," Miles answered. The other man's tone caused him to brace himself for some shock.

"My God, sir! Then you don't know?"

"What ought I to know?" The question was swift as a lightning flash.

"I—Mrs. Sheridan was found to be very ill when the maid waked her late yesterday—shortly after one o'clock it was. I telegraphed to you, at the same time we sent on shore for a doctor. He came at once—a Frenchman—but wanted a consultation. The second man was English."

"Well? . . . Is she better—or worse?" Miles could scarcely speak through the thick beating of his heart. If Betty were dead. . . . He musn't wish her dead. It was caddish—devilish—to wish a woman to die, to go out of the world she loved. But . . . it was hard not to wish. Yale seemed to hesitate. Would he never answer?

"She—didn't rouse, sir. About nine o'clock last night it looked as if she responded a little to the remedies—both doctors were working over her, doing their best. If you had come then, the sight of you might have helped to keep her alive. But . . . in an hour she'd relapsed to where she was before."

A shudder ran through Miles' body. If he hadn't met Nazlo—if he hadn't gone back! . . . Still, it wasn't his fault. He thanked God he hadn't known at the time what hung upon his decision, because—he might have gone back just the same. He hoped not. But—he would never know now what temptation might have done with him.

"What is the matter with my—with Mrs. Sheridan?" he heard himself ask.

"Well, sir, I'd rather the doctors broke it to you, than me. But they're afraid it must have been—deliberate."

"Deliberate?"

"I mean, she couldn't have given herself such a dose of cocaine and morphia—being used to it, according to the maid—without knowing what she was about. It seems it was a tremendous dose, sir—would have killed her long before this, if she'd never taken the stuff before."

"Suicide!" The word spoke itself.

"Yes, sir, must have been. She sent her maid away;

bought the girl a ticket for a masked charity ball; told her not to come back before two o'clock, and to let her alone, even then, let her sleep. When she was found to-day—not till the maid was afraid to wait any longer—the poor lady was fully dressed as she'd been for the evening. She wasn't lying on her bed, but on a divan in the boudoir next door—locked in, and the key of one of the doors near her hand. Her gold bag was there, too, sir, with the hypodermic syringe, inside, and a wee bottle with a drop or two of stuff left in it. After the doctors came, they and the maid got Mrs. Sheridan undressed, and put her to bed in her state-room. But when she rallied, she wasn't conscious enough to speak."

Miles' brain was in confusion. Why should Betty travel all the way to Algiers, just for the sake of killing herself on the yacht, before she had even seen him? Was it because she hoped to give him pain, to make him pity her, in spite of all? Well, she had succeeded! He did pity her, with his whole heart. A soul must have suffered deeply, he thought, before it willed to destroy its own temple. And Betty had been a pretty child, long ago—long ago! Mrs. Parmalee had loved her deeply—and he had tried to love her—for awhile. She had not been the kind of woman—but there were certain thoughts he must not think. They were blood-red flowers growing along the road to hell. . . .

It might be that Betty had met Salvano, and learned that he no longer cared—heard from him that he was going to marry the girl at the Hotel St. George. Sheridan would rather believe that the guilt of what she had done lay at Salvano's door, rather than his: and it was probable. But there was no suspicion in his mind against Salvano as a direct agent in Betty's death.

There never would be such a suspicion in his mind—nor in that of any other. The Italian, true to the subtle traditions of his family in ages long gone, had known how to cover his tracks too well.

"Are the doctors with her?" Miles asked, mechanically.

"Yes, sir, they've never left her since they came," Yale answered. "Will you—"

He did not finish the sentence, for Miles had turned his back, and was on his way to the room where Betty lay.

For a moment he stood on the threshold, when he had opened the door. There was the sound of a woman's suppressed sobbing, and his heart seemed to swell. But it was the voice of Estelle, the French maid, who crouched on the floor.

"It is Monsieur Sheridan!" she choked.

Two men who had been bending over the bed, turned quickly.

"She has gone," said one of them in English.

"Dead!" Miles echoed.

"Dead," the English doctor repeated. "There was little or no hope from the first."

Sheridan stood quite still. He could not speak. His eyes were like empty windows, for his soul had gone away from behind them. It had gone to Bousaada, to Terry, who waited, and watched, and prayed.

THE END